

games™

PlayStation2 | GameCube | Xbox | PC | GBA | Arcade | Retro gaming

INVESTIGATED

LET'S DO LUNCH

A moment on the lips, a lifetime of hits

FEATURE

EVOLUTION OF GAMING

Crossbreeding genres

FULL REVIEWS

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 3

[XB/ARC]

SIM CITY 4

[PC]

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

[GC]

THE SIMS

[PS2/PC]

AUTO MODELLISTA

[PS2]

BATTLE ENGINE AQUILA

[XB/PS2]

TOEJAM & EARL III

[XB]

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA:
A LINK TO THE PAST

[GBA]

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

[PS2/GC]

DEAD TO RIGHTS

[XB/GC/PS2]

BUBBLE BOBBLE

[GBA]

APE ESCAPE 2

[PS2]

IKARUGA

[GC]

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

"You don't know what's coming..."

Tatsuya Minami, Capcom

NETWORK
BIOHAZARD

RESIDENT EVIL 4

REVIEW

METROID PRIME

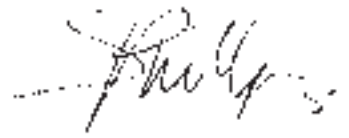
Is this the game that
will change the
GameCube's fortunes?

180

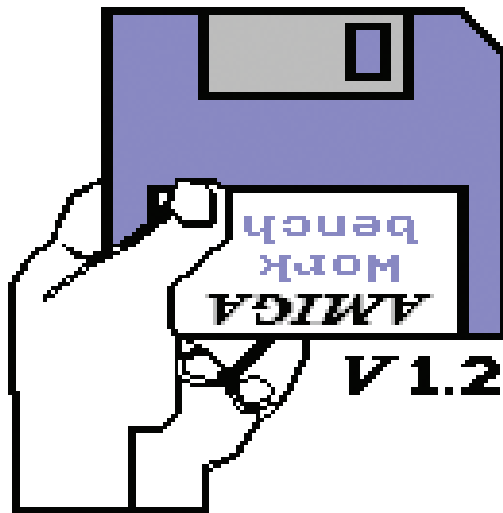
PAGES OF
ESSENTIAL
GAMING



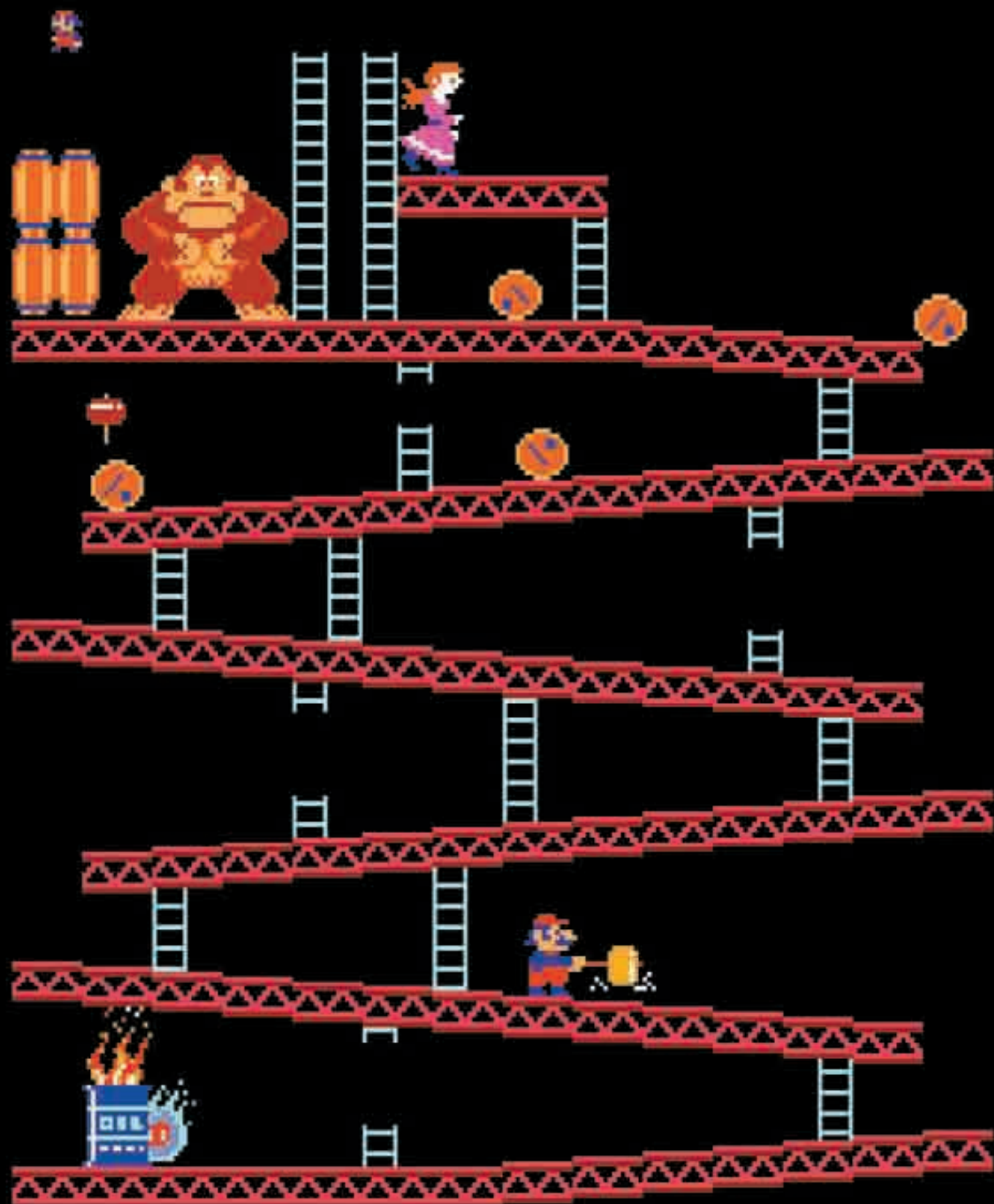
This year should prove to be something of a milestone for those of us who engage in pleasures of a digital nature: 2003 will see Broadband finally becoming available to PlayStation and Xbox gamers, opening up a plethora of new and exciting gaming experiences. However, if the burgeoning (and pricey) prospect of Broadband gaming doesn't yet appeal it's also looking to be a vintage year for videogames – the market is finally showing signs of improvement thanks, in part, to the fact that both the Xbox and GameCube have got into their stride. And GameCube owners have much to rejoice about with the next 12 months offering them possibly the best games line-up of any system. So to keep up with the exciting times ahead, **games™** will be hitting the shelves on a monthly basis from this issue onwards, which we'd like to think is also good news for gamers. For now though, enjoy this issue safe in the knowledge that we'll be with you every step of the way.



Simon Phillips, Group Editor



009900



GAMES TM

L=02/03

BONUS
5200

ISSUE 2

ISSUE 1



HOW HIGH CAN YOU GET ?

CONTENTS



96

FEATURES

32 Community

If there's one place in world we'd choose to have a job making games, it would have to be down in sunny California.

40 Evolution Of Gaming

The second part of our continuing series looks at how specific gaming genres have evolved over the years and what lies ahead.

88 Let's Do Lunch

Taking people on 'jollies' and having an expense account may sound easy, but working as a PR executive is actually harder than it looks...

RETRO GAMING

136 A Job In Videogames

Sometimes, playing at doing a job was harder than the actual job itself.

138 Great Gaming Moment

A rolling stone gathers more than its fair share of Rick Dangerous.

140 Classic Machine

Scourge of the SNES, birthplace of Sonic – say hello to the MegaDrive.

149 Greatest Game Ever

A retrospective look at a futuristic sport (if that's possible).

156 This Month In... 1986

The events, happenings and games from January 1986.



52

PREVIEWS

48

Network Biohazard	48
Resident Evil Zero	50
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	52
Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb	54
Primal	56
The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker	60
IGI 2: Covert Strike	64
Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic	66
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	68
Galleon: Islands Of Mystery	70
SOS – The Final Escape	72
Super Monkey Ball Jr	74
Starsky And Hutch	76
Steel Battalion	78
Lamborghini	80
Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness	82
Showcase	84

REVIEWS

94

Metroid Prime	96
House Of The Dead 3	100
The Getaway	102
Sim City 4	104
Dead To Rights	106
Metroid Fusion	108
Mario Party 4	110
Bubble Bobble: Old And New	111
Shinobi	112
Phantasy Star Online: Episode I & II	114
The Sims	116
Auto Modellista	118
Battle Engine Aquila	119
Ikaruga	120
Ape Escape 2	122
ToeJam & Earl III: Mission To Earth	123
Zelda: Link To The Past / Four Swords	124
Sly Cooper And The Thievius Raccoonus	126
Star Wars: Bounty Hunter	127



66



74 Super Monkey Ball Jr

Can the delights of a monkey in a ball really work on the Game Boy Advance?

102 The Getaway

Sony's much-hyped East End thriller finally get the release that it deserves...

ESSENTIALS

160 Directory

If there's a game you've got to own for your console, you'll find it listed here.

174 Contact

We asked and oh boy, did we receive. You lot have certainly had a lot to say for yourselves since last issue...

170 Subscription

If traipsing down to the shops every month isn't your cup of tea, why not have the magazine delivered straight to your doorstep, eh?

172 Next Month

Want to know what you'll see in **games™** next time?

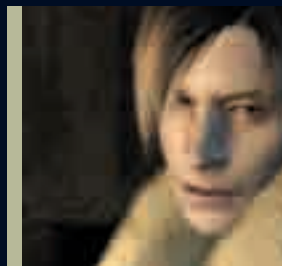


50 RESIDENT EVIL

The saga continues – or rather, starts over from the beginning. Capcom's seminal zombie-packed series shows us why we should be scared of the dark...

NEWS

NEWS | INDUSTRY GOSSIP | OPINION



CONTENTS

FIND OUT WHERE TO GET ALL THE ESSENTIAL STORIES WITH OUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE NEWS

08 CAPCOM

The mighty developer could give Nintendo a shot in the arm with five exciting new titles.

10 THE 'HOG RIDES AGAIN

Despite having a tough time of it lately, SEGA is set to bounce back with authority.

20 THE PLAYERS: ED BOON

Midway's Ed Boon is one of the men responsible for the *Mortal Kombat* series. Did he rip our arms off when we spoke to him? Find out...

22 BROADBAND OF BROTHERS

In a world of 'next big things', broadband is the latest starlet. Find out what it is and what it can do for you in our four-page report.

26 REPORTS

Get the lowdown on life in the West and the East with our correspondents in America and, for one issue only, South Korea.

34 COMMUNITY: COLLECTIVE

We catch up with the ex-pat trio behind The Collective, one of the hottest upcoming development houses in the States.

■ Ever wondered what happened to Leon at the end of *Resident Evil 2*? Ah, well now you know.



■ Unsurprisingly, *Biohazard 4* is shaping up to be the best-looking instalment in the series.



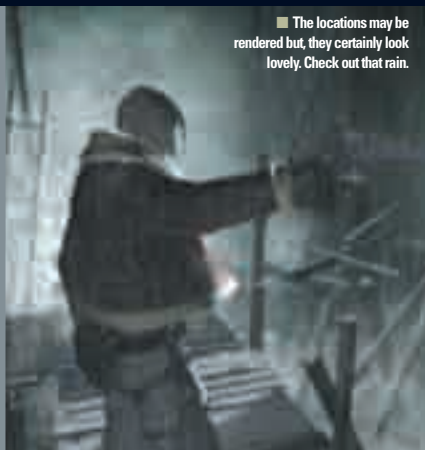
NINTENDO LANDS SOME WEIGHTY ASSISTANCE AS CAPCOM UNVEILS A FISTFUL OF NEW GAMECUBE TITLES

CAPC

■ You'll have to get busy if you want to get rid of the all-new creepy-crawlies.



■ The locations may be rendered but they certainly look lovely. Check out that rain.



How many big announcements do you usually expect from an established firm at the same time? One, maybe two? That's why it came as a surprise when Capcom recently revealed five new GameCube titles at once – four never-before-seen titles and a brand new chapter in the world's best-loved zombie and virus collaboration, *Biohazard 4*.

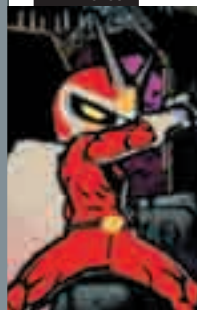
Focusing on one of the series's most popular characters, Leon S. Kennedy of *Resident Evil 2* fame, this sixth survival horror looks to continue the series's trend by leaning more towards the supernatural. Luckily, there'll be no rushing this out for Christmas – *Biohazard 4* is currently sporting a 200X release date (no, really, 200X) so there'll be a fair gap between *RE0* (and the *RE2* and *RE3* ports if they arrive over here) and this latest chapter.

Gameplay details are sketchy to say the least; video footage is all that's been released so far but what we've seen would suggest a fully 3D engine. If this is the case, we're stunned – models, animations and locations look wonderful... even if they are rendered, they're still a joy to behold. We anxiously await the first in-game shots and footage – as pretty as pre-rendered backdrops may be, the series has evolved almost as far as it can within the limitations of a fixed camera.

So while we pick our jaws off the ground, cast your eyes over this and the other four announcements. With the exception of *Biohazard 4*, you could be enjoying these games later this year. You'll be done with *Zelda* by then, right?

OM³=5

VIEWTIFUL JOE



■ Viewtiful Joe – a new breed of superhero

KILLER 7



■ Tonight, Matthew, I will be... Kendo Nagasaki

DEAD PHOENIX



■ Panzer Dragoon-esque action in *Dead Phoenix*

P.N. 03



■ Vanessa Z. Schneider gets busy with her laser cannon

THE BEST OF THE REST – THOSE NEW CAPCOM GAMECUBE TITLES IN FULL

2. VIEWTIFUL JOE

■ The games/art divide suffers another blow as Capcom introduces us to its new superhero, Viewtiful Joe. Stylish side-scrolling action is Joe's speciality – fighting crime with a blend of special effects and tough justice, he must battle through distinctly two-dimensional environments to save (you guessed it) a kidnapped lady. Interestingly, you'll be blessed with powers beyond Joe's mere strength – cinematic effects such as slow motion and zoom can be employed to make the action not only more impressive but also more effective. According to director Hideki Kamiya: "you must fight beautifully". We're none the wiser either but we still can't wait to get our hands on *Joe* some time in 2003.

3. KILLER 7

■ Capcom's other arty title, *Killer 7*, is perhaps also the one most shrouded in mystery. The minimalist style may be striking but it reveals little of the story or gameplay. Delving deeper we discovered the storyline centres around Harman Smith, an assassin with seven personalities (hence the name). The game spans five separate stories around four linked 'worlds' and you'll be able to use every aspect of the twisted lead to your advantage. The seven personas will all play differently so we can expect a blend of action and puzzle-solving reliant on character choice and possibly switching. The *Resident Evil* series may be good grounds for comparison in this respect.

4. DEAD PHOENIX

■ For all the imagination and variety in Capcom's new announcements, we can gladly say that they haven't forgotten that image isn't everything. *Dead Phoenix* is setting itself up to be a similar experience to *Panzer Dragoon*; flying a mythical creature and blasting away at enemies may not be the most original concept, but coming from Capcom we can expect a twist or two somewhere along the line. The floating city environment is looking nothing short of stunning as Phoenix darts in and out of pillars and archways – there's certainly no let-up in the action. Pencilled in for a summer release in Japan, look out for more on *Dead Phoenix* in the not-so-distant future.

5. P.N. 03

■ Standing for Product Number, the last of the big five has more in common with *Devil May Cry* and its ilk than anything else. Heroine Vanessa Z. Schneider leaps, spins and cartwheels about the screen, all the while toting a somewhat overpowered laser cannon. Acrobatic blasting is the focus here as Vanessa sets out to avenge her parents' death by laying waste to robots galore. Hackneyed, we know, but it doesn't make the action look any less gorgeous. Everything is very clean and clinical and although there's a good deal of white around, we've still seen some beautiful variety in enemies and locations. All of a sudden, Dante's Ebony and Ivory pistols look like crummy little peashooters...

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



WHOLE LOTTA LOSSES GOIN' ON

Despite selling like the hottest of cake-related products over Christmas, the Xbox is still causing Microsoft to lose money at an alarming rate. A recent report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission in the US claims that the company's Home And Entertainment division lost \$177 million (roughly £112 million) during the quarter ending 30 September 2002. Of course, that probably won't affect Microsoft seeing as it's sitting on a pile of expansion cash and profit worth over \$30 billion...



SHRINK TO FIT

Having already brought *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Chu Chu Rocket!* and a whole bunch of classic MegaDrive titles to the GBA in the past, it looks like SEGA now has a taste for creating games for Nintendo's handheld. However, what we've seen before has only been a sample of what's to come – next on the 'console-to-handheld' agenda are Dreamcast classics *Crazy Taxi* and *Jet Set Radio*. What's more, they're both going to be in glorious 3D rather than basic 2D affairs. Look for some previews next issue.



The house that Sonic built doesn't look to be crumbling any time soon...

THE HEDGEHOG REBORN

SEGA BEGINS THE LONG CLIMB BACK TO THE TOP OF THE TABLE

It's been a tough couple of years for SEGA. The failure of the Dreamcast, the downsizing of the company and the virtual withdrawal from Europe as a stand-alone entity were all massive blows to the development giant. More recently, news that the firm had "underestimated the brand power of Electronic Arts" (SEGA President Hideki Sato's own words) and had its own sports titles soundly thrashed in the US market by EA's 'same game, different date' approach didn't help SEGA's share value either. Add to that the fact that SEGA Japan's own COO, Satoshi Kayama, acknowledged that the company's key franchises

"cannot reside on just one platform, because the market is too fragmented" and you get the impression that the house of Sonic is having a very hard time of it indeed.

Of course, what you see isn't always what you get and while SEGA has certainly had a rough ride, things are starting to look up. Thanks to a number of new deals and announcements over the last month, SEGA is set to reposition itself not just as a partner to development companies the world over, but also as one of major players in the third-party software market.

Having created the first proper online console in the Dreamcast, it's no shock to learn that one of SEGA's





"WE WILL HELP BRING HIGHER QUALITY GAMES TO CONSUMERS FASTER, MORE EFFICIENTLY AND AT A LOWER COST."

RYOICHI SHIRATSUCHI, CEO, SEGA.COM



most recent deals concerns online gaming – although you might not have guessed that the two companies involved would be Nintendo and Sony. In an effort to make developers' lives easier when creating online games for the PS2 and GameCube, Sega.com has offered itself as a resource to programmers looking to do just that; the SEGA Network Application Package (SNAP) provides everything they need to create effective network gaming experiences.

Ryoichi Shiratsuchi, CEO of Sega.com, is particularly proud of the new deal: "From building the first high-speed online console gaming network to offering Nintendo GameCube and PlayStation2 developers a solution for implementing a network gaming environment with SNAP, Sega.com is truly committed to the future of the videogame industry – online gaming," he said, proving that SEGA's dedication to online games isn't just a short-lived phase.

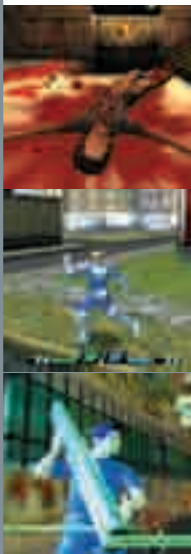
It isn't just the future that SEGA is looking at though. In a move that will have MegaDrive fans in raptures, it has joined forces with Japanese publisher D3 to form 3D Ages – a

partnership dedicated to bringing some of SEGA's finest old-school titles to the PS2. Although most of the titles will be straight ports of the originals (released in batches of four throughout 2003 and featuring classics like *Streets Of Rage*, *Virtua Racing* and *Bonanza Brothers*), sources indicate that four of the games – *Golden Axe*, *Space Harrier*, *Fantasy Zone* and *Phantasy Star* – will actually be pseudo-sequels with all-new graphics and levels. As the retro scene is currently booming, this is certainly good news for PS2 owners the world over.

The biggest (and most surprising) announcement of all though has to be the rebirth of SEGA Europe as a stand-alone publisher. Having resorted to releasing games through firms such as Infogrames over recent months, the European branch of SEGA is now on the brink of re-establishing itself across Europe with a slew of titles such as *Super Monkey Ball*, *Shinobi*, *House Of The Dead 3* and *Sonic Advance 2* being prepared for release in the first half of this year. Could this be the break that SEGA needs to put itself back on top of the development world where it belongs? Let's hope so.

INNOVATION & REINCARNATION

On top of all the retro games that SEGA has pledged to resurrect for next-gen consoles, there are also some re-releases of more recent titles and even a pair of new games on the cards for both the PlayStation2 and Xbox. Top of the list are *Initial D Special Stage* (a high-speed racing game from SEGA Rosso) and *Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution* for PlayStation2, followed by re-releases of several Dreamcast titles for the Xbox: *Illbleed*, *Rent-A-Hero No. 1*, *Dynamite Cop 2* and *Blue Stinger*. All the games are due in early 2003.



■ Just think, you could get paid for testing games, inventing new characters or writing captions like this all day. Easy money, eh?



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

A CAREER IN GAMES IS JUST A HELPING HAND AWAY...

Ever wanted to actually make or promote games, rather than just play them? Then join the ever-lengthening queue – the number of people wanting to break into games is growing bigger every day. Of course, working with games isn't just a case of getting to play them all day; for instance, programmers write code, games testers have to work hard to find bugs and even getting to review games isn't exactly the non-stop rollercoaster ride of gaming that you might expect – you actually have to do proper work as well. Pah.

But if all that doesn't put you off and you're still keen to make a mark on the games industry, then CodeMasters are offering something that could prove invaluable – a series of free career guides available online for those seeking advice on the background, education and skills needed to get a job in the business. Initially aimed at people still in school or college, the guides offer advice on courses and other useful pointers about gaining the knowledge to get the job done.

"We have a great record of taking graduates and making them an essential part of game development teams," said Stephen Harrison-Mirfield, Group Human Resources Manager at CodeMasters. "Hopefully, the guides will help more people to get the best grounding in education and inspire them to further develop their interest in particular fields."

There are more details at:
www.codemasters.com/jobs/careers



Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



KOJIMA GEARS UP AGAIN

Just recently, a number of rumours have sprung up regarding Hideo Kojima's next instalments in the *Metal Gear Solid* series. Apparently, not one but two new *MGS* games are in production; one being a straight follow-up to *MGS2* (and no doubt featuring many of the new ideas seen in *Splinter Cell*), and the other being an online game. As you'd expect, details are virtually non-existent at the moment, though it seems highly possible that one or both games will be officially unveiled at E3 in May.



IT'S ONLY A GAME SHOW

If there's one thing we don't get enough of here in the UK, it's consumer game shows – even though back in the day, you couldn't move for the general gaming public milling around in large venues. Never fear though, if you're looking to hang out with a couple of thousand people and play games, the XSGameshow is coming to the Birmingham NEC. This dedicated consumer event will be taking place from 25 to 27 July, so we advise getting in there early. Check out www.xsgameshow.co.uk for more details.



■ Scantly clad women, swords, knapsacks, mythical enemies, exploring... all the world's finest RPG elements are set to come together as Square and Enix merge.



■ Now that Square and Enix have come together, can we expect *Final Dragon Fantasy Quest*? Er, no.



TWO BECOME ONE

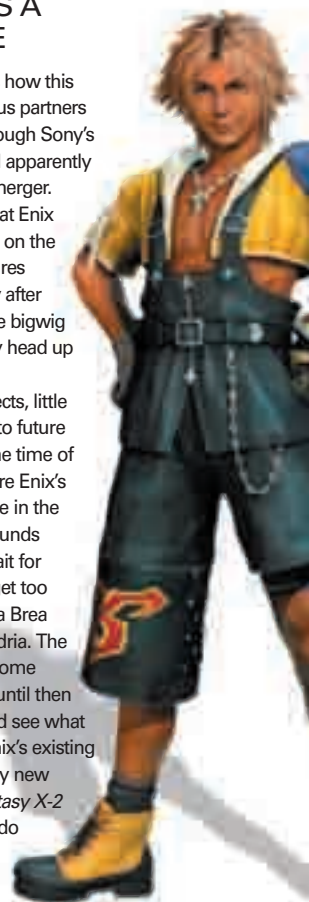
FINAL DRAGON FANTASY QUEST BECOMES A POSSIBILITY AS SQUARE AND ENIX MERGE

In what must be one of the greatest announcements in modern RPG gaming, Square and Enix, two of the biggest names in the field, recently revealed that they will be merging to form Square Enix. The deal, said to be worth nearly £500 million by pre-sale shares, will undoubtedly be beneficial to both parties and may even result in a few more Enix franchises reaching these shores; short of a few Game Boy titles, they've been all but nonexistent on the European console scene. Enix's *Dragon Quest* series continually outsells the *Final Fantasy* games in the East – we just hope this merger gives Square Enix the power (and of course the will) to bring the acclaimed franchise to our humble shores.

After the financial disaster that was *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, Square has been struggling to cover its losses ever since. Enix, on the other hand, has never announced losses in its twelve year history so there should be no money woes as far as Square Enix is concerned.

What remains to be seen is how this alliance will affect the various partners of the two companies, although Sony's hand in Square's affairs will apparently remain unaffected by this merger. Bizarrely, despite the fact that Enix will be the remaining entity on the stock market (in fact, its shares soared to their limit the day after the announcement), Square bigwig Yoichi Wada will apparently head up the new superpower.

Outside of existing projects, little has been said with regard to future titles; a strong rumour at the time of going to press is that Square Enix's first game will be a new title in the *Parasite Eve* series. This sounds viable enough, but we'll wait for concrete proof before we get too excited by the return of Aya Brea and those pesky Mitochondria. The merger will apparently become fully active as of April, but until then we're just going to wait and see what becomes of Square and Enix's existing titles before demanding any new announcements. *Final Fantasy X-2* and *Dragon Quest VIII* will do



OUT OF THE RED

SQUARE REJOICE AS FINAL FANTASY XI BECOMES PROFITABLE

Just before Christmas, Square president Yoichi Wada announced that online RPG *Final Fantasy XI* was set to surpass the 200,000 user mark, putting an end to its money-losing run. This has fulfilled Square's prediction that the game would become profitable before 2003. In fact, it would have been sooner had there not been server problems after an influx of users during the free trial period. On its release, *XI* was branded a failure by many, but sales comparisons to offline titles in the *Final Fantasy* series are a little unfair. Unfortunately, this landmark title for the series has yet to make it out of Japan, but this news may well be the sign Square has been waiting for before unleashing its epic online title on the rest of the world.

So what are the chances of seeing *Final Fantasy XI* over here? As yet, there has been no news either way, but as it's now a commercial success in the East, and Sony need some strong online titles to go up against Xbox Live, we're quietly confident that we'll see it eventually. Translation to English is almost a certainty – a US version is bound to happen even if a European release is not. Japanese analyst Takeshi Tajima pointed out that "games with strong brand names will benefit from going online" but where does that leave other online ventures? With *Unreal* and *Final Fantasy* we can expect a lot of big names going online over the next few years, but Europe will probably only get titles that perform exceptionally well in their home territories. After all, it's a brave online developer who goes up against *Final Fantasy XI*.



■ *Final Fantasy XI* has proved that gamers can play with one another, rather than being lonely.

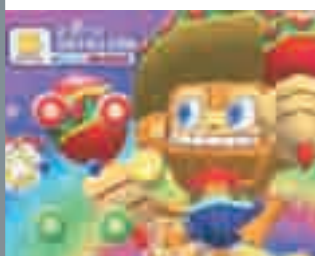
THE TOP FIVE

GAMES FILLED WITH MONKEY-LOVING GOODNESS



No.5 DONKEY KONG

Although technically he's a gorilla MONKEY COUNT: 1



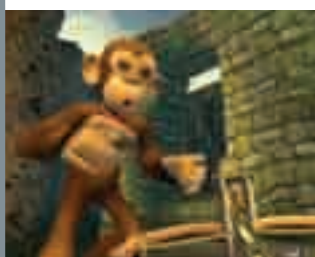
No.4 SAMBA DE AMIGO

Dancing monkeys a-go-go MONKEY COUNT: 1



No.3 SUPER MONKEY BALL

Monkeys in balls... joy MONKEY COUNT: 4



No.2 TIMESPLITTERS 2

Never give guns to monkeys MONKEY COUNT: UP TO 16



No.1 APE ESCAPE 2

Too... many... monkeys... MONKEY COUNT: 300



CODEMASTERS CONFIRMS AN XBOX PORT OF ITS PS2 HIT

TOCA RACES ONTO XBOX

It's been rumoured since the launch of the PlayStation2 game last year, but now Codemasters has confirmed that *TOCA Race Driver* is being ported to Xbox. The Xbox version is due in March and, although it had been suggested that Xbox Live support would be included, current details don't mention this. There is still time for the feature to be added – most of the other games launching in March are using the service, after all. Even if the game isn't online though, a number of other Xbox-exclusive features have been disclosed, including qualifying rounds before championship races, six extra cars per race, better AI, improved graphics and Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound support.

For anyone who managed to miss the PS2 version, this *TOCA* game changes the regular racing formula by basing progression around a single driver named Ryan McKane. As you make your way through the game, each event is broken up by real-time cinematic sequences relating to your performance in the previous race, adding more character than we've come to expect from realistic racing games.

And if it's realism you want, *TOCA* is the game for you. Despite the sensationalised cut-scenes, the in-game action is true to life, featuring 38 international circuits, 42 touring and sports cars and 13 full world championships. The true-to-life car dynamics and crash physics have been tested by professional race drivers to guarantee maximum authenticity and this is backed-up by visible real-time damage and destructible body parts.

Watch out for more details of this enhanced version of the game very soon.



■ Xbox *TOCA* will feature music by Ash and Morcheeba (among others). But where's the MOR driving rawk? Brian May? That bit from *Layla*?

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



GOTTA GET BACK IN TIME

Yes, we were annoyed when Nintendo announced it was giving away discs to Japanese gamers who pre-ordered the new GameCube *Zelda* game – especially as it had GC ports of *Ocarina Of Time* and *Ura-Zelda* on it. But now we're a little happier. Why? Because the disc has been confirmed for the US as well. The only question remaining is whether you'll have to pay for it; as *Ura-Zelda* was never released (and so never translated into English), it'll cost Nintendo a fair bit. Still, at least it's coming, eh?



MAP-READING MONKEYS

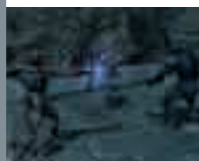
TimeSplitters 2 – easily one of the best console FPS games out there today and a damn good laugh to play with your mates. And now Eidos has created a new monkey-friendly MapMaker tutorial Web site that's got everything you'll need to come up with the best multiplayer maps ever. You can check it out at (deep breath now): www.eidosinteractive.com/m/gss/legacy/timesplitters2/mapmaker



■ Thought you could only 'be' Sam Fisher on the Xbox? You've been had... sorry.



■ Still, at least other console owners can now enjoy it too. Share the wealth and all that.



■ Ubi Soft has already said the PS2 and GameCube versions will be 'cut down'.



EXCLUSIVE SCHMEXCLUSIVE

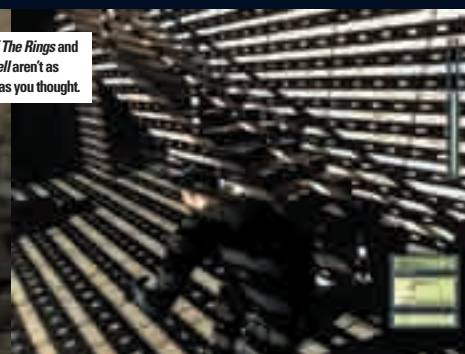
PS2 AND XBOX 'EXCLUSIVE' GAMES SET TO JUMP SHIP

With three massive consoles battling it out for the top spot in the market today, it's no shock to discover that the phrase 'platform exclusive' appears to be a rather dirty pair of words at the moment. Sure, Sony has the power to swing its cheque book hard enough to secure titles like the *Grand Theft Auto* series and Capcom has a certain empathy for the GameCube as of late, but, for the most part, games that are billed as exclusives don't tend to stay that way for long.

Take two of the biggest games of Christmas 2002, for example – *Splinter Cell* on the Xbox and *Lord Of The Rings*:

The Two Towers on PS2. Are you one of those gamers that bought either of these titles thinking that you had got one over on people who couldn't play them? Maybe you even bought a console specifically. Well, bully for you – except that Ubi Soft and EA have now done a u-turn on the whole exclusivity thing and announced cross-format versions of both games. As it stands now, *Splinter Cell* for GameCube and PS2 will be appearing in March, while *Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers* on GameCube and Xbox hits the shelves sometime in the Spring – unsurprising, considering how popular both games were. Looks like it really is money that makes the world go round after all...

■ *Lord Of The Rings* and *Splinter Cell* aren't as exclusive as you thought.



THE WIT AND WISDOM OF PETER MOLYNEUX

"HE'S ALWAYS GOT SOMETHING TO SAY!"
PETER ON NEW XBOX TITLE, BC:

"The way you play the game will decide whether man lives or dies – that's the high concept behind the game"

Translation:
"It's *Populous* all over again, but I'm hoping that nobody notices"

MORE FROM PETER NEXT MONTH!



ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST

TOP GBA DEVELOPER CRAWFISH GOES UNDER

Despite claims that the games industry is more profitable now than it has ever been, another high-profile development house has closed its doors for good. Crawfish Interactive – best known for its work on GBA titles like *Ecks Vs Sever*, *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* and, most recently, *Street Fighter Alpha 3* (which scored 8/10 in *games™* issue 1) – was among one of the most respected British GBA developers around, which is why it was a bit of a blow to hear that the company went into voluntary liquidation late last year. At the time of the announcement, the company was working on numerous GBA titles

including ports of the classic Amiga games *Wings* and *Gods*.

Although no exact reasons were given following the liquidation, the recent slump in demand for Game Boy Advance titles combined with late payments for work from certain publishing companies apparently played a part in the closure.

Certainly, the folding of such an influential firm is a tragedy in itself, but the fact that it's just one of several developers to close in the last six months could indicate an unsettling trend in the industry. Here's hoping the infection doesn't spread any further in the near future...

INDIES LEFT FURIOUS AS STORES SELL THE GETAWAY A WEEK BEFORE SCHEDULE

GETAWAY EARLY

The launch of Sony's *The Getaway* in December provoked outrage from a number of companies, including Sony itself, as some retailers began selling the game as far as seven days ahead of schedule. The problem seems to have arisen from DVD and video rental shop Blockbuster, only to be followed by Woolworths and other non-specialist stores. Unsurprisingly, the move confused specialist retailers and their customers alike, who weren't entirely sure whether the release date had been brought forward.

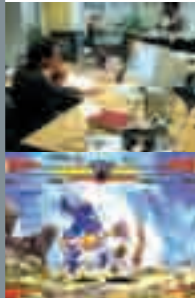
We spoke to independent game store owner Martin Bean, who commented: "I was really disappointed to discover that some stores had

broken the street date – especially as *The Getaway* was one of the biggest Christmas releases. We end up looking like idiots when we tell people a game isn't released until a certain date, only for them to walk into Woolworths and find it on sale. People think we are rubbish and don't know what we are talking about, when really it's the other way round."

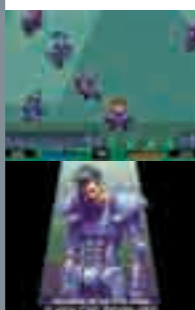
Sony says that the offending stores won't receive future deliveries of PS2 games until much nearer to the release date to ensure that the problem won't happen again.



■ Insert your own maritime pun about 'going under', 'sinking' ... that sort of thing.



■ Crawfish made top titles like *Street Fighter Alpha 3* and *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe*.



GAMES ROOM 101

THINGS WE HATE ABOUT VIDEOGAMES

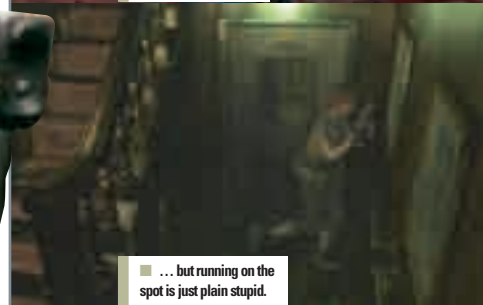
NO.2: THE 'INVISIBLE BOUNDARY' DILEMMA

Even though the boundaries of videogames have been pushed back a long way in recent years, it's still fair to say that all games take place within a finite world. That's why there are only certain places you can go inside them – after all, games like *Final Fantasy* have to have external boundaries otherwise you'd be able (in theory) to carry on forever. Of course, there are many ways of dealing with presenting these boundaries and it's the lazy way that they're often handled that really gets our goats.

We're firmly of the opinion that invisible walls suck – more so in some cases than in others. It's mostly adventure games that use it as a rule, but other genres are just as guilty. The question is, how much effort would it take to put in a proper wall (even with a limited amount of texturing) to tell you that you just can't go any further? Not much, we reckon. Of course, even when you do use actual walls to create a boundary, there are problems. Why, for example, does the *Resident Evil* series persist in allowing its characters to run on the spot against walls? Something as old as the original *Tomb Raider* made Lara stop and hold her hands up and that was on the PSone. So what's the deal with *Resident Evil Zero*, eh? Honestly, it wouldn't take much to change it...



■ Invisible walls are quite annoying here...



■ ... but running on the spot is just plain stupid.

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



SONY MAY CRY

It's looking more and more likely that Nintendo may be buying *Resident Evil* developer Capcom, and may actually have finalised the deal by the time you read this. The rumours started last September when Capcom predicted losses of ¥12.7 billion (£60 million) for the current financial year. Many expected Microsoft to jump in and take advantage, though the recent announcement of five new exclusive GameCube games (see pages 8 and 9) has shifted focus away from the American giant and onto Nintendo. Watch out for an update next issue.

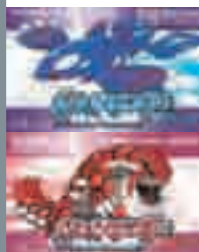


UNLUCKY FOR SOME

Anyone looking forward to playing the rather innovative cel-shaded first-person shoot-'em-up *XIII* will have to hang on just a little bit longer – the game has been delayed until the third quarter of 2003. "Quality is always our priority, so we have decided to take additional time to ensure that this game is as close to perfect as possible," said a Ubi Soft spokesperson. "The extra time will allow us to introduce new elements of gameplay and integrate specific features for each platform." Oh well...



GOTTA CATCH 'EM ALL OVER AGAIN...



■ You've still gotta catch 'em all but this time you won't be able to find them so easily.

THE GREAT YELLOW HOPE

It's official – Pokémon isn't dead. Since their November releases, *Pokémon Ruby* and *Sapphire* have shifted over a million copies each. This makes them the best-selling Game Boy Advance titles to date and they're still unshakeable at the top of Japanese charts. It's easy to see why, too; we've put a good few hours into them and they're every bit the sequels we hoped they would be. Further to last issue's preview, several new discoveries have been made within the game.

The good news is that the total number of monsters has risen from 351 to 386. The bad news is that so far, only 202 of these are catchable. Even with Action Replay codes, the new Pokédex won't register those beyond this point – an upgrade is thought to be required

but has yet to be found within the game. Perhaps it exists outside the starting Houden area... Speaking of which, the heavily-rumoured new land masses have yet to be discovered – so we remain hopeful. Other rumours suggest the 184 missing Pokémon will be obtainable via some kind of E-card Reader or GameCube link-up, but the number of missing Pokémon would imply that this isn't the case.

Non-importers will have to wait until late this year, as there's no set date for a PAL version, but it's out in the US on 17 March. We'll wait for an English language version before we cast judgment, so expect an import review sometime soon.



If you've ever found yourself saddled with one of the lame *Army Men* games out there (remember, there have been one or two good ones... honest), now's the chance to do something about it. Just pop it in a brown padded envelope and send it along to:

Dismissed, Soldier
games™
Paragon Publishing
Paragon House
St Peter's Road
Bournemouth
Dorset BH1 2JS

Trust us... we're professionals.

■ Make the world a better place. Send us your bad games.



games™
ARMY MEN
RIDDING GAMERS OF THE SHAME OF OWNING LAME GAMES...

Don't believe the hype – that's what Public Enemy once told us (very wisely, we might add) and yet we still do it, especially when it comes to videogames. Just because something looks pretty or someone in PR tells us something is good, doesn't mean it is – believe us, we've been doing this long enough to know.

Having now had its fill of *Turok Evolution* though, the games™ trash compactor is open for business once more. This time, it thirsts for the blood of *Army Men*. God knows why 3DO persist in bringing out more games in this god-awful series (aside from the RTS ones, which are actually not bad), but they do... so it's time to make a statement.

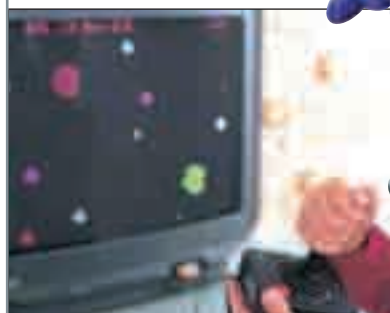
Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



BLAST FROM THE PAST

The thought of enjoying your favourite old-school Atari games might sound good at first, but it's not as easy as it sounds: trawling eBay, hanging around car boot sales and digging up cartridges buried in the desert all take time and money. That's why the nice folks at DC Studios have come up with the Atari TV Game – a perfect replica of an Atari VCS 2600 joystick with the bonus of having ten genuine Atari 'classics' on it. It'll be out in February, if you're up for a spot of retro action.



WOULD YOU LIKE CASHBACK?

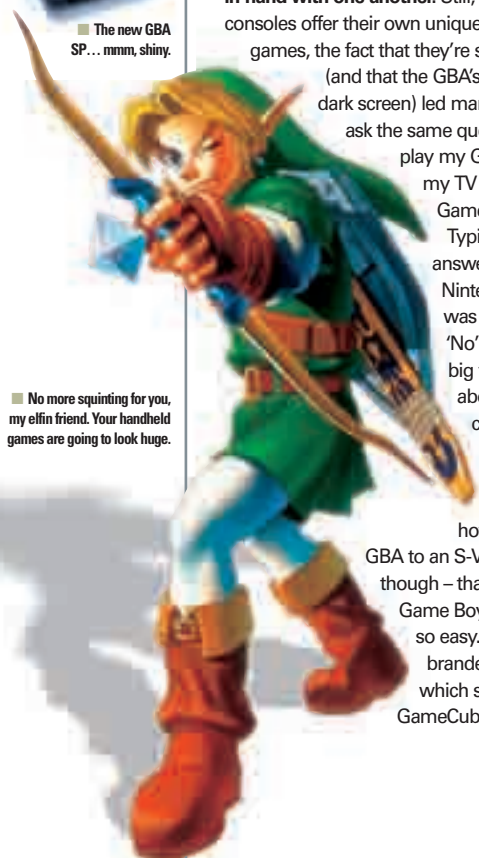
Nintendo might insist that the GameCube isn't going to see a price drop soon, but that hasn't stopped it making sneaky cuts in the US. Buying a GC over the counter gets you a voucher, which can be sent back to Nintendo for a princely rebate of \$25. What's more, you can earn \$5 off selected titles (including *Mario Sunshine* and *Metroid Prime*). Of course, this system means that Nintendo, not retailers, end up making a loss. Maybe they're trying to please all the people, all of the time.



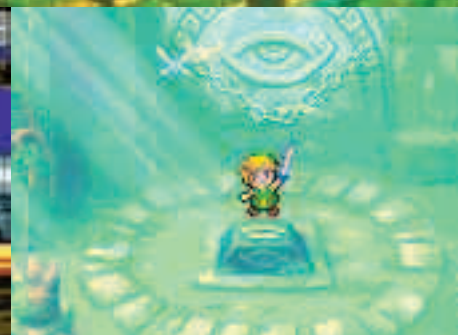
■ Now you can see GBA games in widescreen (if you've got a widescreen TV).



■ The new GBA SP... mmm, shiny.



■ No more squinting for you, my elfin friend. Your handheld games are going to look huge.



A GAME IN THE HAND...

... IS WORTH TWO ON THE GAMECUBE, SAYS NINTENDO

The GameCube and the Game Boy Advance – two consoles that, unsurprisingly considering they're made by the same company, were made to go hand-in-hand with one another. Still, while both consoles offer their own unique brand of games, the fact that they're so incestuous (and that the GBAs has a terribly dark screen) led many gamers to ask the same question: can I play my GBA games on my TV through my GameCube? Typically, the answer from Nintendo back then was an emphatic 'No'. But now it's a big fat 'Yes'. Forget about using a complex system of link cables or having to hotwire your GBA to an S-Video block though – thanks to the Game Boy Player, it's oh-so easy. The officially branded player, which slots into the GameCube via the high-

speed port on the bottom, not only allows you to play any Game Boy Advance, Game Boy Color or original Game Boy game through your TV, but also lets you use the regular GameCube pad to control the action. Even better, you can plug in your GBA via the GBA/GC Transfer Cable and use that as a controller, or link several Game Boy Advances together via the GBA Link Cable and play multiplayer games at your leisure.

The fact that this new add-on will push the number of games available for the GameCube from nearly 180 to well into the thousands is something that Nintendo are cheekily emphasizing as much as possible. In any case though, the announcement of the Game Boy Player can only be good news all round. Unless you're an optician who relies on gamers squinting at their GBAs and losing their eyesight for business, of course.

STOP PRESS!

Just hours before we went to press, Nintendo announced that the brand new Game Boy Advance SP will be released in the UK on 28 March. This new, ultra-slim handheld boasts a backlit screen, a rechargeable lithium battery with a life of ten or eighteen hours (depending on whether you have the light on or off) and a flip-top screen. Next issue, we'll be interviewing Nintendo's Shelly Friend to find out more...

games™ THE PLAYERS

DECAPITATIONS, EXPLODING TORSOS AND A WIDE SELECTION OF INTERNAL ORGAN REMOVALS WITHOUT THE NEED FOR ANY SURGICAL APPARATUS – ALL PART OF THE JOB IF YOU WORK FOR MIDWAY'S CHICAGO OFFICE. ED BOON TELLS US WHY MORTAL KOMBAT IS MAKING A COMEBACK, WITHOUT EVEN TRYING TO REMOVE OUR SPINES. AW, BLESS.

"OVER THE YEARS, THE PLAYERS' RESPONSE HAS BEEN VERY CLEAR AND THEY'VE BOUGHT ALMOST 20 MILLION MORTAL KOMBAT GAMES – HOW MANY FIGHTING GAME FRANCHISES CAN SAY THAT?"

ED BOON

ED BOON

MIDWAY GAMES

By nature, Ed Boon isn't a violent man – in fact, he wouldn't hurt a fly (or so his PR executive tells us). Of course, given that he's one quarter of the team that came up with one of the goriest beat-'em-ups of the Nineties, *Mortal Kombat*, you'd expect him to be slightly unhinged – and maybe he is, having worked in the games industry for over 16 years. Sure, he's worked on plenty of projects from pinball machines (back in the days when Midway wasn't even called Midway) to games like *High Impact Football* and, er, *High Impact Football 2*, but he will always be known to most gamers as 'the bloke behind *Mortal Kombat*'.

While he won't be drawn on why John Tobias (once co-developer of the *Mortal Kombat* series and now the brain behind upcoming Xbox beat-'em-up *Tao Feng*) decided to fly the coop, Boon still has fond memories of how *Mortal Kombat* originally came to be. "In 1991, our company was into producing arcade machines and wanted a game to be completed quickly that could be on our production line by the summer of 1992," reminisces Boon. "So four of us started working on a fighting game that we initially wanted to be licensed using Jean Claude Van Damme. For one reason or another, our talks with his people fell through and we decided to come up with our own characters." The fact that Boon grins knowingly at this thought suggests that he's quite pleased this is the case and we have to agree... particularly as we've played *Street Fighter: The Movie*. Urgh.

Beyond the initial idea though, even Boon himself was shocked at how quickly the game went from the drawing board to being a full-on arcade game. "Five months after the redesign, we were testing the game in a local arcade and the response we saw from players was incredible," he says. "Our management also saw the response, told us we could have a couple more months to add a female character [who turned out to be Sonya Blade] and we then introduced *Mortal Kombat* to the arcades in August of 1992." And the rest, as they say, is history.

Unfortunately, some would say that it hasn't been much of a history – following *Mortal Kombat* and its far superior sequel, the games saw a drop in quality. It's probably because of this that the series became a bit of a joke among beat-'em-up fans. However, rolling with the punches is something the *Mortal Kombat* team have become used to by now. "I'm not so much

concerned about the critics as I am the players who actually buy the games," says Boon. "There have certainly been lower points in the *Mortal Kombat* series, but I wasn't involved with those products and can only speak for the ones I worked on. So far, we've gotten every indication that players are really enjoying *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance* and that's the bottom line... at least, it is with me."

It's a fair point – although we're sure there's a case for denial counselling in there somewhere. As you'd expect though, looking at the success or failure of past efforts isn't as important to Boon as believing in the here and now – as you read this, *MK: DA* is selling like hot entrails across the US. This, it seems, is the turning point for the *Mortal Kombat* series and a chance for the team to regain the ideals that the original game set out to define. However, that doesn't mean a heavy reliance on the features that made *Mortal Kombat* so big in the first place; after all, just packing the game with a stack of bizarre finishing moves is sooo *Mortal Kombat 3*. "From the beginning, we decided that we wanted to concentrate our efforts on the gameplay features of this game," insists Boon. "While fatalities are always very cool, we didn't want them to be the main focus of *Deadly Alliance* – after you see a fatality a few times, the shock value begins to diminish but if there is something new and fun with the fighting engine it brings more of a lasting appeal to the game. Since this is a *Mortal Kombat* game, of course we're going to have fatalities – we just didn't want that to be our only focus."

It's clear that Ed and his team have set out to clear the good name of *Mortal Kombat* and create a fighting game that'll stand up with the best of them. There's no doubt they've done a good job but there's one thing that still bothers us – why the excessive use of the letter K? "We'd already come up with the name *Mortal Kombat* but since that's a common phrase, we wanted to do something to spice it up," explains Boon. "We ended up changing the C to a K, but didn't realize how far we would be taking that whole spelling thing. Now it's just kind of funny." Indeed. Although we doubt our English teachers would agree.

Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance is out on 14 Feb on every major format and previewed on page 52.



THEY SAY IT'S THE NEXT BIG THING – BROADBAND, THAT IS. BUT THEN THEY SAID EXACTLY THE SAME THING ABOUT VIRTUAL REALITY TOO. OF COURSE, IN AMERICA BROADBAND INTERNET CONNECTIONS AND ONLINE GAMING ARE ALREADY COMMONPLACE, AND ALL THE SIGNS SUGGEST THAT A SIMILAR SURGE IN POPULARITY IS ALREADY STARTING TO HAPPEN ACROSS EUROPE.



BROADBAND OF BROTHERS

games™ investigates why Broadband will be the next big thing, and which hardware is best suited to this exciting new form of high-speed communication.

WHAT IS BROADBAND?

On a very basic level, Broadband is an extremely efficient method of transferring huge amounts of data from one computer to another, be it for downloading music or video files, viewing web pages or playing online games.

The term 'Broadband' actually means a transmitter that works on a broad spectrum, though the name has been carried across to the high-speed

cable and telephone line alternatives that are available today.

But while true broadband is almost impossible to get hold of, the alternatives available to the masses certainly offer a huge increase in speed over a regular 56Kbps modem. In fact, the fastest dial-up currently available is over 16 times faster than a standard 56Kbps link, though the costs involved with such a connection may discourage potential users from committing to the service for the time being. With a connection transferring data at this pace, an MP3 file that would normally take around 15 minutes to

download will be completed in less than 60 seconds. At present though, you're looking at £35 a month but it's likely that prices will come down over the next year as the service becomes more widely accepted.

WHAT DO I NEED TO GET CONNECTED?

To get broadband in your home, you need either cable or a telephone line that has been upgraded to ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line).

If you're not sure whether your local BT exchange has made the necessary upgrades, you can check at www.btopenworld.co.uk by entering your postcode. If you're using a PC you'll also need a network card or USB port, though connecting a console to broadband is a little different.

PC

Although Broadband has only recently started to become widespread in the UK, it has been available for several months to those willing to spend in excess of £50 a month for the privilege. This lurking presence has given Webmasters ample time to adjust the content of their sites in preparation and we're already seeing sites that feature much more memory-intensive imagery and sound content, including higher-resolution photography and screenshots, as well as a greater number of downloadable music and video files.

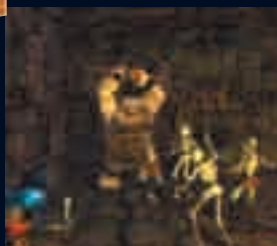
Of course, even basic Web pages benefit from the extra download speed. While a regular 56K modem will open and display a page within a few seconds, a Broadband link will display it immediately. Anyone who regularly surfs the Net will appreciate the need for faster download speeds – much of the time spent browsing with a 56K modem is spent waiting for pages to download, rather than viewing their content.

But it's online gaming that benefits the most from this additional transfer speed. If you've ever competed against other gamers online, you'll be aware of the difference ping rates can make when you're involved in a graphically demanding game such as *Unreal Tournament* or *Counter Strike*. Basically, the slower your connection, the higher the ping rate and the more delay there is between the time that other players perform an action and the time that it's displayed on your screen. Clearly, this puts players with a slower connection speed at a huge disadvantage. For Broadband users, ping rates have been reduced to such an extent that they're almost non-existent. While a 56K modem would usually result in ping times of 300 and upwards, an average Broadband connection cuts ping times down to less than 50. There is still a slight lag, but this is hardly more noticeable than linking two PCs together directly.

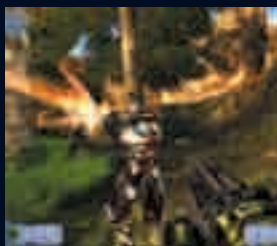
Of course, PC gaming has started to decline a little lately and you'll need to constantly upgrade if you wish to play the few quality games that do get released. However, the fact that you can use a PC Broadband link to view web pages as well as to download music and video makes the format more versatile than any online console.

PC GAMES ONLINE

Seeing as how the PC has been online for longer than any console, it already has a huge catalogue of online games. Sure, many of them tend to be either first-person shooters or MMORPGs, but there are certainly great titles available in both of these genres.



■ The PC is a great choice for players wishing to play MMORPGs, such as *Everquest*. Top multiplayer action.



■ First-person shooters such as *Unreal Tournament 2003* are extremely popular on PC.

■ A broadband connection on a PC can open up a world of high-speed entertainment.

"WHILE A REGULAR 56K MODEM WILL OPEN AND DISPLAY A WEB PAGE IN A FEW SECONDS, A BROADBAND LINK WILL DISPLAY IT IMMEDIATELY"

XBOX

Out of the three console manufacturers, Microsoft is embracing the concept of Broadband gaming most readily. The company has spent the last five years preparing servers to handle a closed infrastructure specifically for use with its online gaming service, Xbox Live. On top of that, Xbox hardware has been built with Broadband gaming in mind. Not only does the machine include an 8GB hard drive, suitable for saving bonus data available to download from the Xbox Live servers, but it also benefits from a high-speed Ethernet port which, with a standard Ethernet cable, should link an Xbox to any Broadband modem. Unfortunately, some Broadband providers only cater for a USB (Universal Serial Bus) connection at the moment, though such problems should be rectified by the time Xbox Live launches on 14 March.

A year's subscription to Xbox Live will cost £45 and the pack will be on the shelves at most stores stocking Xbox consoles. As well as the Xbox Live software DVD, the pack also includes two free games – motorbike simulation *Moto GP Online* and party game *Whacked* – as well as a headset comprising a mouthpiece and headphone. Known as the Communicator, the headset is an integral part of the Xbox Live service, replacing the keyboard as the main method of communication.

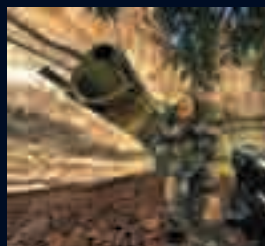
Other clever innovations include a friends list, much like MSN Messenger, that gives you the opportunity to invite players you know to join you in an online game. Icons highlight which of your friends are currently available and you can simply send them a voicemail to see if they feel like challenging you.

Of course, all these features would be pointless if Xbox Live wasn't receiving strong support from third-party software developers. Thankfully, more than 60 games are currently in the works that will use the service for downloading extra levels, characters and music, or for competing against other Xbox owners online. In fact, a number of titles are already available – the hugely successful *Splinter Cell* and *Unreal Tournament* being among them.

During its first week on sale in America (where most households already have a Broadband connection), Microsoft shifted a massive 150,000 Xbox Live Starter Kits. It will be interesting to see if Europe is so eager to embrace the service in March.

XBOX GAMES ONLINE

Microsoft has spent years preparing its Broadband infrastructure and securing exclusive online games for Xbox. Around 60 titles are due during 2003 alone and there are already a few PAL games that are compatible with the service, despite the fact that it doesn't launch here officially until March.



■ Thanks to the similarities between Xbox and PC, *Unreal Championship* has translated really well.



■ Xbox Live allows you to download extra levels and other goodies for games such as *Splinter Cell*.

"MICROSOFT HAS SPENT THE LAST FIVE YEARS PREPARING SERVERS SPECIFICALLY FOR USE WITH ITS ONLINE GAMING SERVICE"

PLAYSTATION2

Not to be outdone by Microsoft, Sony has hurriedly secured a number of online games for PlayStation2, as well as preparing a fairly competent Broadband service. The problem is that the PS2 hardware doesn't come equipped with the necessary components to connect directly to a Broadband modem – you'll need to buy a PS2 network adapter for that.

The adapter slots into the PS2's expansion port and houses all the required Broadband upgrades, as well as a regular 56K modem. The pack also comes with a software disc that lets you choose from a list of possible internet service providers. Just like Xbox Live, Sony's Broadband service will connect to the network via an Ethernet cable – a factor that may restrict which Broadband packages are compatible.

At face value it would seem that Sony's service is comparable with Microsoft's, though there are a few drawbacks. For a start, the network adapter could cost as much as £50 in the UK. On top of that you'll also need a memory card to store your settings, adding another £20 to the overall price – and that's before you've taken the possibility of monthly charges into account. Another optional extra that will bump up the price is the communication headset, an integral part of online team combat game *SOCOM: US Navy Seals*.

But by far the biggest drawback is the lack of a hard drive – the downloadable extras available on Sony's machine will be limited by the size of the storage medium (the 8MB memory card). The company does have plans for an external hard drive, though it hasn't yet committed to memory size, price or release date.

Sony's online gaming service is certainly comprehensive, and many third-parties are including online content in their games. But there are many hidden costs and a lack of foresight means downloads will be limited by PS2's technology.

PS2 GAMES ONLINE

While Sony's Broadband service isn't as comprehensive as Microsoft's, the company has used its grasp of the games industry to secure a few exclusive online titles, most notably *Final Fantasy XI* and *Everquest*. However, it's *John Madden NFL 2003* and *SOCOM: US Navy Seals* that are making the most noise in America.



■ Sony's strong relationship with Squaresoft has resulted in *Final Fantasy XI* being exclusive to PlayStation2.



■ *SOCOM: US Navy Seals* uses a headset, much like the one packaged with Xbox Live.

"AT FACE VALUE IT WOULD SEEM THAT SONY'S SERVICE IS COMPARABLE WITH MICROSOFT'S, THOUGH THERE ARE A FEW HIDDEN DRAWBACKS THAT SOON BECOME APPARENT"

"AS FAR AS GAMES GO, NINTENDO HAS A HUGE PORTFOLIO OF TITLES THAT COULD POTENTIALLY WORK VERY WELL ONLINE"

GAMECUBE

As you'd expect, Nintendo is being typically secretive with regard to its European online plans. However, the company has revealed that its only current online title, *Phantasy Star Online: Episodes 1&2*, will be released in the UK during the first quarter of 2003, hinting that its own online service will coincide with the launches of Microsoft and Sony's plans. Like Sony, Nintendo intends to give its users the option of either a Broadband or 56K modem connection – the argument being that many households have yet to upgrade to Broadband. By not laying all its eggs in one basket, Nintendo is keeping its options open if Broadband fails to catch on.

Of course, the amount of extra content available to GameCube owners online is restricted by hardware limitations, as with PlayStation2. Like PS2, the GameCube doesn't have a hard drive and will save any downloadable content on memory card. And while PS2 memory cards are restrictive enough with 8MB, the capacity of the GameCube Memory Card 59 is just 4MB. However, a number of alternatives are on the way, including the Memory Card 251 and Panasonic's SD-Memory Card, which can hold 64MB of data. Nintendo has also hinted that an external hard drive is a possibility, though it's unclear at this stage whether such a thing will be released.

As far as games go though, Nintendo has a huge portfolio of titles that could potentially work very well online. SEGA's *Phantasy Star Online* launched in America and Japan last year, along with the Broadband and 56K modem adapters. Interestingly, both adapters sold in similar numbers, with sales figures suggesting that some *Phantasy Star Online* players bought one of each.



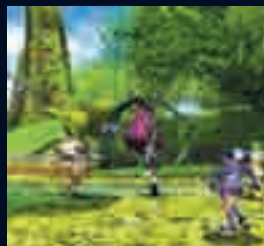
But despite these positive results, Nintendo still won't reveal details about further online titles.

Rumour has it that online versions of *Mario Kart*, *Mario Party*, *Animal Crossing* and *Pokémon* are all in production although nothing has yet been confirmed. Hopefully it won't be too long until

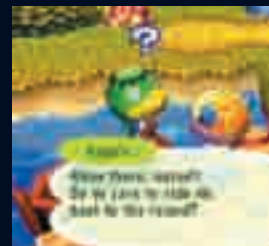
Nintendo makes the news official.

GAMECUBE GAMES ONLINE

As Nintendo's online plans are much vaguer than either Sony or Nintendo's, it's not surprising that there are fewer online games for GameCube. In fact, *Phantasy Star Online: Episodes 1&2* is the only one. However, rumours are suggesting that some of Nintendo's top games will go online during 2003.



■ Despite GC *Phantasy Star Online* being almost identical to the Dreamcast game, it has proved popular at retail.



■ Rumour has it that an online version of *Animal Crossing* will launch on GameCube during 2003.

BROADBAND TERMINOLOGY

USEFUL TERMS AND PHRASES YOU'RE LIKELY TO HEAR WHEN DEALING WITH BROADBAND

■ BROADBAND

A high-speed method of data transfer. True Broadband works on a broad spectrum and although this isn't exactly the same as the Broadband packages offered by BT, NTL, AOL and others, the results are very similar.

■ ADSL

ADSL stands for Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line. This is basically a standard phone line that has been upgraded to simultaneously handle both digital data (for high-speed connections such as Broadband) and analogue data (used for regular telephone connections). This set-up means you can still use the telephone, even when you're online.

■ ADSL Filter

When you use a telephone with ADSL, the digital information being transferred for online purposes gets picked up as distortion. An ADSL filter basically connects the telephone to the phone line and filters out all the digital information, resulting in distortion-free phone calls.

■ ISP

ISP stands for Internet Service Provider. This is the company that supplies the internet connection to your home. BT, NTL and AOL are all internet service providers.

■ ETHERNET

Ethernet is one method of transferring large amounts of data at high-speed. Each of the consoles use Ethernet to connect to Broadband modems.

■ KBPS

Kbps stands for Kilobytes per second – a measurement for the speed at which data transfers.

■ MODEM

A device that deals with online information being fed to a computer terminal.

■ ROUTER

A device that handles online information and feeds it to multiple computer terminals.

BT [BRITISH TELECOM]



Installation Costs: £85 (Home 500 Plug & Go) or £250 (Home 500 Engineer Assisted)

Package Includes: ADSL modem and two ADSL filters

Monthly Subscription: £29.99

Download Speed: 500Kbps

Upload Speed: 256Kbps

Equipment Required: PC or Apple Macintosh with USB port

PC Operating

Systems Supported: Windows 98, Windows 2000, Windows ME, Windows XP

Mac Operating Systems Supported: 8.6 up to 9.2, 10.1 and 10.2

Other Extras:

- Free virus/spam protected e-mail account for up to ten e-mail addresses
- Free 50Mb of web space to build your own website

"BT IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A BETTER BB SERVICE – GAMING AND BB DEVELOPMENTS WILL GO HAND IN HAND"

NTL [NATIONAL TRANSCOMMUNICATIONS LTD]



Installation Costs: £50 (existing NTL customers), £75 (new customers)

Package Includes: Broadband modem

Monthly Subscription: £14.99, £24.99 or £34.99 (depending on chosen download speed)

Download Speed: 128Kbps, 600Kbps or 1000Kbps (1Mbps)

Upload Speed: 64Kbps, 128Kbps or 256Kbps (relative to the download speeds listed above)

Equipment Required: PC or Apple Macintosh, plus a cable TV/phone connection to your home

PC Operating Systems Supported: Windows 95, 98 or 2000, Windows ME, Windows XP

Mac Operating Systems Supported: 8.5, 8.51, 5.6 or 9

Other Extras:

- Free e-mail account for up to 15 e-mail addresses
- Free 55Mb of web space to build your own website

"NTL BB IS FASTER, BETTER QUALITY AND CHEAPER THAN THE COMPETITORS. WE HAVE ALSO SIGNED A DEAL WITH MICROSOFT TO OFFER A BB GAMING CONNECTION AND ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO THE LAUNCH OF XBOX LIVE"

AOL [AMERICA ONLINE]



Installation Costs: £85 (plus £10 postage and packing)

Package Includes: Broadband modem, two ADSL filters

Monthly Subscription: £27.99 (based on a 12 month contract)

Download Speed: 512Kbps

Upload Speed: 256Kbps

Equipment Required: 233Mhz PC with at least 32MB system memory (RAM) and a free USB port

PC Operating Systems Supported:

Windows 98 second edition, Windows ME, Windows 2000 or Windows XP

Other Extras:

- Seven free e-mail accounts
- Up to 140Mb of web space to build your own website

"WITH ITS LONG ESTABLISHED RECORD AS THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE ONLINE SERVICE PROVIDER, AOL OFFERS A COMPELLING BROADBAND PACKAGE"



LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD EX-PATRIOT, THE SHAPE

"AMERICANS ARE SO EAGER TO CONSUME, FOREVER GREAT WHITE SHARKS, THAT IT'S SOMETIMES

A topic that cropped up a while ago on the games™ forum revolved around the question of videogames achieving mainstream acceptance on a par with major music and movie releases. As I sit here watching Steven Seagal's *E! True Hollywood Story* (a two-hour biography in which he growls through endless chronologically disjointed interviews looking like a baked potato and wearing successively improbable tribal jackets), I wonder... could this be Hideo Kojima one day? Will the Housers share the reverence of the Coen brothers or perhaps the infamy of the Farrellys? More worryingly, if fame awaits our favourite programmers and producers, will mainstream sirens such as serial-wife Jennifer Lopez insist upon working their way through a couple of them each year?

While it's unlikely I'll be reading the headline 'Kazunori's Terrible Secret: The Eating Disorder That Nearly Killed Him!' on the cover of *Globe* magazine any time soon, it's safe to say that videogames have burrowed further into contemporary American life than they have in Britain. It serves as an appropriate middle ground between Japan's admirable integration (voice actors doing Saturday morning TV interviews or rendered characters staring out from prime-location billboards in Tokyo) and Britain's stour segregation (seeing Peter Molyneux on ITV at two in the morning). Between Mr T advertising 1-800-COLLECT – 'I pity the fool that doesn't know it saves a buck or two!' – and Catherine Zeta Jones going on

about mobile phones, you'll routinely catch spots for *Metroid Prime*, *GTA: Vice City* and *Dead To Rights* in one ad break on MTV in the morning. Right now, videogames are trickling in to fill the gaps of popular American culture. For example, it's not weird for big stars to talk about games. Professional unintelligible speaker Ja Rule recently spent half of his interview on the prestigious *Daily Show* explaining exactly how he likes to play *Hitman 2*, while Slipknot have said that when they're not eating roadkill or torturing naïve groupies on the tourbus, they're playing *Grand Theft Auto*.

I recently had occasion to visit the innermost chambers of the local police headquarters – crack pipes on one desk, a big binder labelled 'Terrorist Threat Information' on another. I was waiting to catch a glimpse of the SWAT team leader after hearing that – this is great – they call him Duke Nukem. Of course, it's pronounced Dook Nookum but all the same, a small shard of the videogame world has penetrated a no-nonsense sanctum as mature as the police force. When Squad Leader John Lujick arrives, I see why they named him after 3D Realms's tough-talking one-man army. After dropping an unholy amount of tactical gear into his car, he steps into the light where I can see him. Sure enough, he's huge; at least six feet four inches of bulky intimidation from gum-chewing noggin to combat boots. He sports close-cropped blonde hair and, beneath a camouflage overcoat, wears a



MOVING FORWARD LIKE RAVENOUS FRIGHTENING FOR THE EX-PAT...

velcroed mass of bulletproof shielding with a patch labelled 'Extreme Armor'. A friend is showing him a new piece, a .50 cal Desert Eagle fresh from the store – so that's another \$1095 American dollars on its way to the Israelis then – and sure enough, Duke shows fanatical interest. "Kinda small though, ain't it?" says Duke, while I struggle to hold the gun at arm's length for a matter of seconds. When he leaves, I asked another cop what Lujick has at home. "He's got an arsenal," is the reply.

Lujick's talents were probably required over the festive period. Americans are so eager to consume, forever moving forward like ravenous Great White sharks, that it's sometimes frightening for the ex-pat. The day after Thanksgiving – a big day for discount sales – so many crazed shoppers tried to stampede into my local Wal-Mart when it opened at 6am that the doors broke off. And scenes outside stores where you can buy something more exciting than a toaster were substantially less civil. They fight for things on the shelves. They park in the fire lane to get last-minute items. On the other hand, Liam Gallagher's gormless face isn't on TV and Chris of Chris's Gun Shop is talking me through the right way to fill out the firearms application for a legal alien like myself... so I think I'll stay a while longer.

Until next time, don't
have nightmares...

THE
SHAPE

MISS ABOUT BRITAIN...

Ant and Dec



LOVE ABOUT AMERICA...

Court TV



AMERIKAAN

PRODUCTS, PLACES, SERVICES
AND EVENTS FROM THE LAND
OF THE FREE

DAIRY QUEEN

Widespread
franchise
specialising in soft-
serve ice cream.
Gorge on their
large Reese's
Peanut Butter Cup
Blizzard and you'll
be feeling a happy
kind of sick.



USA MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Take Two	PS2
2	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway	Multi
3	Metroid Prime	Nintendo	GC
4	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	Xbox
5	WWE Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth	THQ	PS2
6	James Bond 007: Nightfire	EA	Multi
7	Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers	EA	PS2
8	Metroid Fusion	Nintendo	GBA
9	Madden NFL 2003	EA	Multi
10	Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets	EA	Multi

■ *GTA: Vice City* is still riding high at the top of the US charts – for people in Miami it must be like Londoners playing *The Getaway*. Perhaps.

■ *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance* hasn't managed to knock *GTA: VC* off the top spot yet. Those superhuman fighters are no match for men in pastel suits...

WANT ANY
QUESTIONS
ANSWERED BY THE
SHAPE? THEN DROP
HIM A LINE AT:
theshape@comcast.net
... HE MIGHT LISTEN,
IF YOU'RE LUCKY.





KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT TOMO OHNO

"INSTEAD OF PLAYING GAMES AT HOME, KOREANS TEND TO GO TO INTERNET CAFÉS WITH THEIR FRIENDS AND PLAY TOGETHER"

As a console game-development tool vendor, I usually get to travel once every two months to meet game developers and console makers. Last month for instance, I also got the chance to visit South Korea – a country with an interesting gaming culture and even more interesting food. For example, some of the restaurants I visited look more like aquariums – octopi and turtles wriggling in a fish tank, while the next one has various fish and squid swimming around inside. Octopus is to be eaten alive – you wind the tentacles around a stick and eat while it's moving. Sometimes, you can see tentacles sticking out of your mouth and wriggling to attack your nose...

Anyway, Korea has a big online gaming market. More than 60 per cent of households have ADSL access at home and there are more than 25,000 'PC Bangs' (Internet cafés) – and this is a country with a population of only 48 million. But how can Internet cafés be so big when most of the houses have high-speed access? This is because of the unique gaming culture of the country – Koreans like to go out in groups, while the Japanese tend to do things alone. It is common for Japanese people to have dinner or drink alone, but that seems very rare in Korea.

Instead of playing games at home, Koreans tend to go to Internet cafés with their friends and play together. They form a team to play against others on the network, then chat with friends in the café during the game. Afterwards, they go out for drinks (and some octopus, maybe), so the experience is set half

in the virtual and half in the real world. Mahjong is also a group game – you visit a Mahjong shop with your friends and chat while playing. Unfortunately, the number of Mahjong shops is decreasing in Japan – possibly because this game requires four people and that's too big a group for Japanese people nowadays.

For me, Mahjong was the very first interactive game that I learnt from my father and played with my family; we even used to bet the task of washing the dishes on it. My father never lost and I was the most frequent washer – I'm glad we didn't bet any money...

Come to think of it though, it was great that all of my family sat down together and talked – Mahjong worked as a great catalyst in a family with two teenagers. Because playing the game itself was fun, I wasn't really bothered about results. I guess I can say it was a culture in my family, because it gave us moments and pleasure to share. It's a rather simple game (once you know how to play) but we enjoyed it for more than five years without getting bored until both my brother and I left home for college. Surprisingly, we still enjoy it now despite its simplicity. I can't say the same about any videogames I played in my youth though. Is it only me who does not have a single console game I can keep playing for more than ten years...?

Kind regards

トモオホノ

■ Ever wondered about the phrase 'a can of worms'? Well, here it is. The contents are edible.



TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

LESSON TWO: A BITE TO EAT

Gohan o tabete!

Nihon ryori wa kaga desu ka?

Kono supu wa honto ni oishi-so desu...

Kore o zenbu taberu n' desu ka?

O-naka o kowas.

Sumimasen ga, o-tearai wa Dochira desu ka?

Let's have a meal!

How about Japanese cuisine?

This soup looks really delicious...

Are you going to eat all of that?

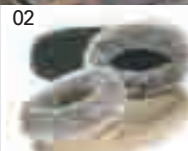
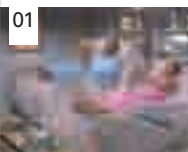
I have an upset stomach.

Excuse me, but which way is the toilet?

JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Tales Of Destiny 2	Namco	PS2
2	SD Gundam G Generation Neo	Bandai	PS2
3	Pokémon Ruby	Nintendo	GBA
4	Pokémon Sapphire	Nintendo	GBA
5	Lupin The Third: Magician King	Banpresto	PS2
6	Dark Chronicle	Sony	PS2
7	Mario Party 4	Nintendo	GC
8	Resident Evil Zero	Capcom	GC
9	Kamen Raiden Ryuuki	Bandai	PSone
10	Taiko No Tatsujin	Namco	PS2

(Dengeki Console Game Ranking Top 50, Week ending 01/12/02)



As I've mentioned before, there is quite a difference between Eastern and Western games. To find what makes Japanese games so special (other than slippers), I'm planning to interview Yu Suzuki and his team in the next month or so; if you have any questions for Suzuki-san, please send them to the **games™** team so they can forward them onto me.



WORK, REST AND PLAY

Usually when I travel with an engineer from my company, the fact that I'm not a permanent resident means I can spot interesting things that the locals take for granted, especially within game development studios. Here are some of the things you won't see if you visit a developer in the UK:

• SLEEPING TICKET

Many Japanese game development studios have a 'napping room' in the building. However, one particular studio (no names mentioned) uses this facility to the extreme. If you work for this company, you aren't allowed to leave the office until you finish your assigned tasks of the day. If you literally can't work anymore, you have to use your allocated 'sleeping ticket' to catch a few hours of nap time. What happens when you use up all your day's ticket? I guess you have to buy one from your colleague... or learn to sleep with your eyes open.

• SLIPPERS

As a rule, programmers dress the same globally: t-shirt and jeans or chinos – very relaxed. One difference you'll find in Japanese studios though is the use of slippers. When we visited Tri-Ace (developer of *Star Ocean*), we found a shoe cupboard at the entrance. All staff – including the president – wore slippers inside. Of course, they also have 'guest slippers'. Maybe this is the secret key to Japanese games? Just be sure not to wear military boots if you ever visit them.

• UNIFORM

I said that developers all dress the same, but there is one exception – at Nintendo's beautiful headquarters in Kyoto, the men wear white zip-up overalls over a shirt and tie, while women wear blue uniforms. Because of these uniforms, and the massive reception all paved with white marble without any game-related materials, it feels and looks very clean and serious – when you enter, the receptionists in uniform stand up and bow. In fact, the only game-related material you can find is a paper miniature of a GameCube on the reception desk. (Incidentally, Sony's headquarters are in stark contrast with this – the reception area is filled with demos and marketing materials of the latest titles, while only the receptionist wears a uniform.)

• TOILETS

Nothing to do with games, but one gadget that attracted my engineer was an electric toilet seat. It comes not only with a heated seat and warm washer, but also with automatic flashing sensor and 'SoftClose' seat ("This unique seat is specifically designed to reduce injury and to eliminate annoying 'Toilet Seat Slam'..." – a direct quote from www.totousa.com). I assume that means there are large numbers of people who injure themselves on toilet seats every year. Note to Kim (my engineer): you can't bring it back to the UK, because the voltage is different. Plus you'd look suspicious coming back through customs with a toilet seat around your neck.

games™ THE PLAYERS



WHERE WOULD YOU LOOK TO FIND ONE OF THE MOST PROMISING NEW PUBLISHING HOUSES IN GAMING? JAPAN? AMERICA PERHAPS? KEEPING THINGS A LITTLE CLOSER TO HOME, **games™** HOPPED THE CHANNEL TO CATCH UP WITH EDOUARD LUSSAN, PUBLISHING DIRECTOR AT RELATIVE NEWCOMERS WANADOO. IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR TECMO, IT'S MORE THAN GOOD ENOUGH FOR US...

"THE VARIABLE LIFE CYCLES OF CONSOLES CAN
CREATE BIG HOLES IN THE MARKET FOR US, SO
WE NEED TO HAVE A STRONG PC LINE-UP IN
CASE THERE IS ANY SUDDEN COLLAPSE IN THE
CONSOLE MARKET."

EDOUARD LUSSAN

EDOUARD LUSSAN

WANADOO

It's a sad truth that developers and publishers outside of the US and Japan seldom get the attention and respect that they deserve. But

European developers are on the up and France seems to be the place to be at the moment. Everyone is fully aware of the likes of Ubi Soft and Infogrames but the mention of newcomers Wanadoo would most likely be met with a few blank looks. Based in Malakoff, France, and little more than a year old, Wanadoo has already worked with some of the biggest names in the industry today, both in terms of developers and software titles – Tecmo, anyone? *Speedball 2*, perhaps? High quality stuff...

"We made a promise two years ago to be a new publishing force in the market," says Edouard Lussan, Publishing Director of one of France's hottest prospects. "As you know, two years in this industry is not long; it's only enough to make one or two games." Surrounded by exotic cuisine and first-rate entertainment at its 2003 line-up party, it's obvious that Wanadoo has every faith in its products for the next twelve months. We have no trouble seeing why, either; this year the fledgling publisher is due to release games from the developers responsible for *Prisoner Of War*, *Delta Force* and the *Dead Or Alive* series. The latter is potentially the most interesting – how does such a new publishing house acquire the rights to a title like *Rygar*? "It began with *Project Zero*," Lussan explains. "We were a new and motivated firm on the market offering a similar figure to our rivals and Tecmo decided to give us a shot. We did a pretty good job on *Project Zero* and when it came to *Rygar*, we were in competition with another firm offering more money than us. In the end, the CEO of Tecmo gave the license to Wanadoo regardless due to previous good experiences with us." It's plain to see why Tecmo was pleased with Wanadoo's work – having thoroughly enjoyed *Project Zero* (sinisterly named *Fatal Frame* outside Europe), we were glad to see it get the commercial success and critical acclaim it deserved.

Every publisher needs to start somewhere and it soon becomes clear that Lussan has no illusions of grandeur, citing several early titles in the company's history as "average games". But we soon begin to notice his

enthusiasm toward newer titles and the names *Dark Age Of Camelot* and *Iron Storm* crop up several times. Lussan seems generally pleased with the reception these titles have received but still wants more. "An average score of 75% [for *Iron Storm*] is pretty good, but not good enough," he remarks, obviously looking forward to the next wave of software. Moving away from the PC-based origins and into full multi-format territory is taking its time but the progress is steadily encompassing all available formats. When we brought up the Nintendo handheld, however, Lussan let out a sigh. "We have had some very bad experiences in the GBA market," he admits as he goes on to explain how *Speedball 2* was far from the success it was expected to be. "How can you make money from selling so few copies?" he asks. How indeed.

So what's next for France's 'next big thing'? America is the first subject Lussan brings up. "For next year, we're trying to build strong relationships within the US market," he says hopefully. *Iron Storm* is currently one of the only Wanadoo titles to cross the Atlantic but the fact that it performed better in the US than in Europe is nothing if not promising. Even so, Lussan remains optimistic yet realistic. "It's unlikely that we'd have a worldwide hit with one of the first titles we release – we have to work on this," he says, before giving us his hot tip for 2003. "So long as we don't make any mistakes with *Sniper Elite* [a *Hitman/Splinter Cell*-style title with a WW2 setting], we could have our first global success." If what we've seen is anything to go by, he may not be far from the mark...

Sniper Elite is due Winter 2003 across every major format.



COMMUNITY

EVERY ISSUE, **games™** GOES BEHIND THE SCENES WITH A DIFFERENT DEVELOPER. THIS MONTH, WE'RE OFF TO THE STATES WHERE THE COLLECTIVE REVEALS A FEW SECRETS.

**THE COLLECTIVE**

WE DISCOVER THE
UPCOMING TALENT AT
THE COMPANY
RESPONSIBLE FOR
BUFFY THE VAMPIRE
SLAYER AND INDIANA
JONES AND THE
EMPEROR'S TOMB

California is the Sunshine State, the home of Hollywood. So perhaps it's not surprising that the best-known games developed by The Collective have featured a selection of Tinseltown's biggest names. *Buffy*, *Star Trek*, *Men In Black*, *Indiana Jones*... it's a veritable *Who's Who*. The Collective was founded in 1997 by three videogame veterans; brothers Douglas and Richard Hare and ex-Virgin Interactive colleague Gary Priest. They set up the company after working together as leads on *ToonStruck* and, despite operating from the dream-like state of sunny California, the three men actually come from the UK – Doug and Richard from Musselburgh, Scotland, and Gary from Birmingham. So far, their main achievements have included *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* on PC and *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* on Xbox and, with the likes of *Wrath* and *Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb* due later in the year, it looks like The Collective will go from strength to strength. But it hasn't always been that way. "The hardest part was starting the company without much in the way of momentum," reveals Gary, when asked about the difficulties of starting from scratch. "A lot of development companies spring out of teams coming off a successful game and they usually have their first contract secured before they set up shop. We'd been around a while and thought we'd land a deal

The Collective is based in the heart of Newport Beach, California – a beautiful coastal town 40 miles south of Los Angeles.



After a lengthy development period that saw production jumping from one format to another, *Buffy* was finally released on Xbox last year. Surprisingly, for a licensed product, the game was solid, fun and contained the full flavour and atmosphere of the popular TV show.

in a snap, but it was a lot harder than we thought." When The Collective finally did secure its first contracts, they were merely porting existing software from the PC to the PSone – this didn't give them much room for creative freedom. Thankfully, one thing led to another and the company soon secured the opportunity to create its first in-house title, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine – The Fallen*, for the PC.

Although their first big game was based on the *Star Trek* universe, this wasn't where the name 'The Collective' came from. "I was returning from San Diego after a day trip on the Amtrak," explains Gary, "and this was one of the names I thought that summed up our desire to create a development environment based upon teamwork and collective minds all working towards a common goal." And it's because of those collective minds' work on *DS9* that the company secured its second contract. "Fox Interactive approached us to do *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* as a result of seeing some early work we'd done on *DS9*," says Doug Hare. Although the opportunity to work with such a lucrative licence was exciting, he admits that no-one had anticipated just how difficult it would be to bring *Buffy* to life. "The biggest lesson I took away was how hard it is to create a new engine and toolset, as well as trying to create a revolutionary game based upon that engine," he says. "New engine systems and gameplay features were flying into the codebase at a massive rate in order to support game production, and managing that whole process was a little hectic at times. Now the engine and toolset are very mature, creating games is a whole lot easier." In fact, the *Slayer*

graphics engine offers the designers so much creative freedom that it's being used again, this time to bring *Indiana Jones* to life on PC, Xbox and PS2.

"The majority of the events portrayed in *Emperor's Tomb* take place in 1934 – it's actually a prequel to *The Temple Of Doom*," younger brother Richard Hare tells us. "The story concerns the secret history of the First Emperor of China, his search for immortality and the incredible tomb in which he was buried more than 2000 years ago. Not to give too much away, Indy becomes involved in a quest to locate the tomb and an artefact of incredible power buried within it. Of course, a number of dangerous, competing groups are attempting to locate the artefact or protect it, including Nazis and members of an occult Chinese triad, the Black Dragons." Aside from the original storyline, the developers have also used their own artistic licence where the gameplay is concerned: "Indy can pick up anything in the environment and use it against his opponents, including chairs, bottles, swords, table legs and machine guns," Richard points out. "Although we have considerably widened the players' arsenal in comparison to previous *Indiana Jones* games, we have ensured that Indy's traditional weapons of choice – his fists, pistol and whip – remain at the heart of the combat," he adds.

It's taken almost 20 years for Richard, Doug and Gary to get to a position where they can oversee a project as significant as *Indiana Jones* – it was the mid-Eighties when they each began working in the games industry. This was a boom time for videogames – the arcade industry was

"I'M ALWAYS IMPRESSED BY THE TALENTS OF THE PEOPLE WE HAVE HIRED ALONG THE WAY"

RICHARD HARE

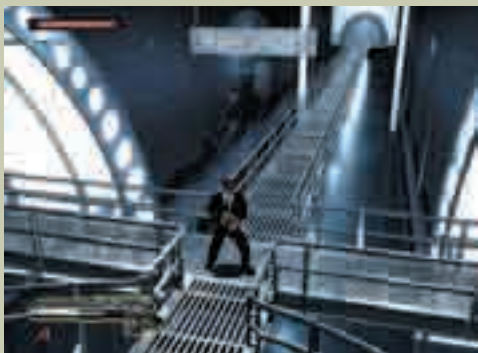


THE PAST

When The Collective first opened its doors in 1997, it hadn't secured any contracts. However, once the first couple of projects were into production, it didn't take long before other publishers started to take notice...

MEN IN BLACK PSONE [1997]

■ One of The Collective's first games was this PC-to-PSone port of *Men In Black*.



STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE – THE FALLEN MAC, PC [2000]

■ *Star Trek: DS9* was the first game where The Collective was allowed to use its creativity.



BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER XBOX [2002]

■ The depth of combat in *Buffy* was astonishing for something that was essentially an adventure game.



01

"MY VERY FIRST GAME WAS CALLED FRANK BRUNO'S BOXING FOR THE SPECTRUM AND AMSTRAD"

GARY PRIEST

■ Gary Priest, Richard Hare and Douglas Hare gave up the delights (hmm) of the UK to go and make games in America. Just think, all that Californian sunshine and they're indoors at a computer all day. Might as well have stayed here...

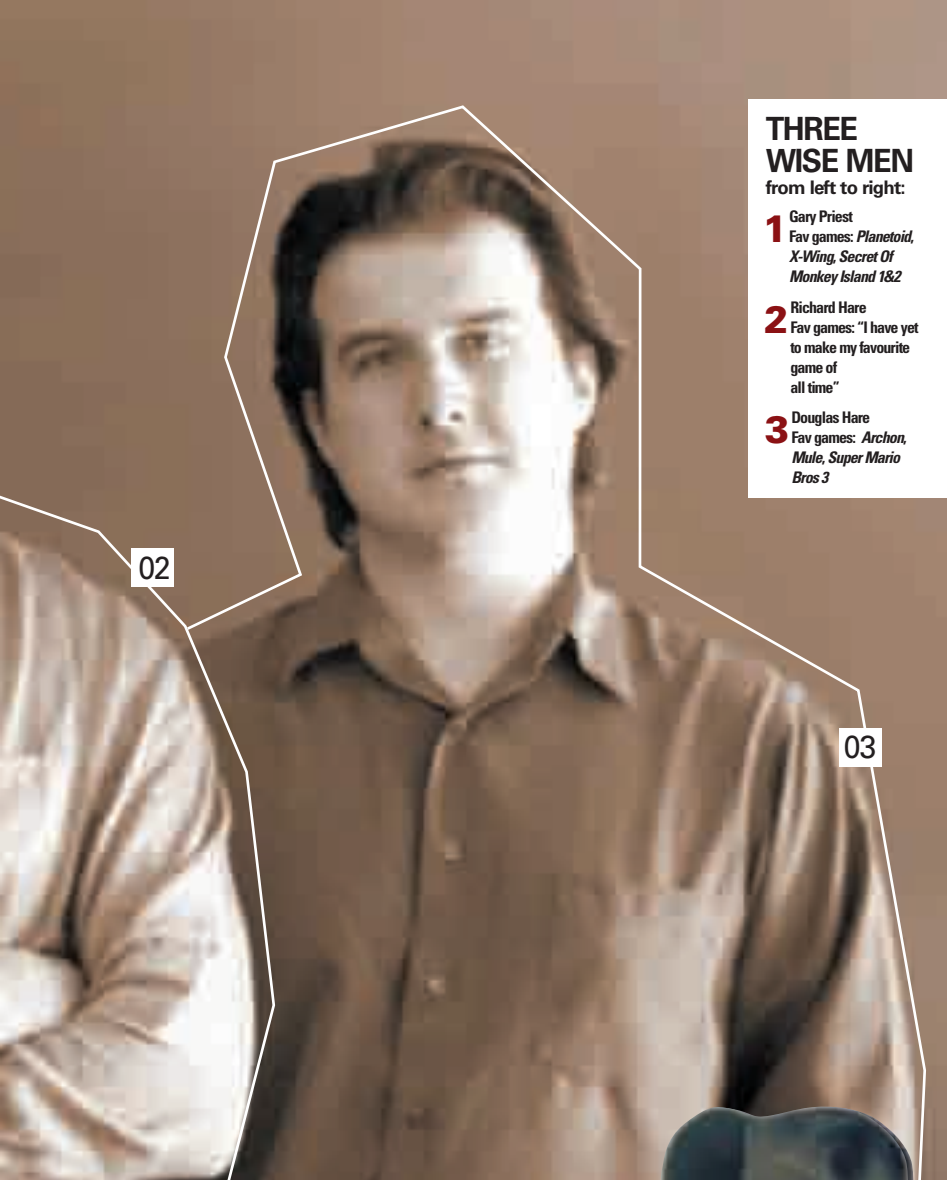
"BACK IN '86, BEING A GAME PROGRAMMER WASN'T REALLY A RECOGNIZED CAREER CHOICE"

DOUGLAS HARE



► thriving and it was gradually becoming clear that bedroom programming could lead to a career. In 1985, Gary Priest (then aged 16) landed his first job in gaming. "I started working for a company called Elite systems, before moving to Gremlin in 1986," he says. "My very first game was called *Frank Bruno's Boxing* for the Spectrum and Amstrad." At the same time, Douglas Hare was also starting to create games, though it wasn't really something he'd considered as a career. "You've got to remember that back in '86, being a game programmer wasn't really a recognized career choice," he says. "Indeed, much of the population, including my mum and dad, considered games a fad, like hula-hoops, or something." Even so, Doug did pursue a career in the industry and went on to work on classics like *Krusty's Super Funhouse* on the SNES. Meanwhile, younger brother Richard was attempting to realize his dreams by studying philosophy and psychology. "Initially, my plan was to become an astronaut," he explains. "However, realizing that the NASA headquarters wasn't conveniently located near to Musselburgh and that the Russian space program had mothballed, my career goal changed to something a little more down to earth – a rock star." Richard never did become a rock star, but, for the time being at least, being creative director and co-owner of The Collective is giving him (and the other owners) more than enough to think about.

■ "The amount of hours and personal sacrifice it takes to run a business, and the instability and tricky economics of our industry, can sometimes be a drag," says Richard. "It's a



THREE WISE MEN from left to right:

1 Gary Priest
Fav games: *Planetoid*,
X-Wing, *Secret Of*
Monkey Island 1&2

2 Richard Hare
Fav games: "I have yet
to make my favourite
game of
all time"

3 Douglas Hare
Fav games: *Archon*,
Mule, *Super Mario*
Bros 3

delicate balancing act between home life, with three young children and my very understanding wife, and the exceptional demands of being in one of the fastest and most competitive industries in the world," adds Doug. But, while the three owners are committing a huge amount of their time to making a success of The Collective, they're also quick to praise their employees. "Although I take pride in my own work and the efforts of my partners, I'm always impressed by the talents of the people we have hired along the way whenever they create something special – be it design, art or technology," Richard points out. "There's something quite magical about sitting down in a room and seeing something for the first time," adds Doug, "whether it's new technology, tools, art, level design... It's moments like those that make this industry a great place to work." And when you see the list of titles that team members have been involved with prior to working at The Collective, it's no surprise that the directors are so keen to flag their employees' abilities. With titles as diverse as *Street Fighter II Turbo: Hyper Fighting*, *Grim Fandango*, *Civilization* and many others included in the line-up, it seems that the company has knowledge spanning enough genres to create whatever type of games it wants. That's why The Collective is definitely a developer to keep an eye on.

■ Indiana Jones is the latest big name to come out of The Collective's studios.



THE FUTURE

The quality of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* helped to raise the profile of The Collective. It was because of these titles that LucasArts approached the company with the *Indiana Jones* licence, as well as agreeing to publish the upcoming turn-based action game, *Wrath*.

INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB

2003 [PC, PS2, XBOX]

■ Using the *Slayer* graphics engine, The Collective is currently bringing *Indiana Jones* to life as part of a close collaboration with LucasArts.



WRATH [GC, PS2, XBOX]

■ This RPG-cum-strategy-cum-fighting game will appear on the three major consoles.



RELEASE LISTS

Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc GBA, GC, PC, PS2, Xbox This is currently looking like an enhanced version of *Rayman 2*

Jurassic Park Operation Genesis PC, PS2, Xbox Theme Park meets *Jurassic Park*

Devil May Cry 2 PS2 Will this be as good as its predecessor? Find out next issue.

games™ MOST PLAYED

METROID PRIME

Format: GameCube
Publisher: Nintendo

Despite good reviews, we can't help feeling that some of Nintendo's supposedly triple-A GameCube titles have fallen short of the mark. But *Metroid Prime* is right up at the top with the likes of *Super Mario World* and *Zelda: The Ocarina Of Time*. That's why we can't stop playing it.



SUPER METROID

Format: Super Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo

After playing *Metroid Prime* on GameCube, we were inspired to look back over the *Metroid* series. We were pleasantly surprised to discover that even after all this time, *Super Metroid* still stands up next to the titles being released today. A superb blend of atmosphere, action and imagination.



DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION

Format: Arcade, PS2, PSone, Dreamcast
Publisher: Konami

There aren't many games that help you keep fit as you play them – in fact *Dance Dance Revolution*, or *Dancing Stage* as it's called in the UK, is probably the only one. It's also one of the few games that attracts interest from the whole office whenever we put on our dancing shoes.



PLAYSTATION2

Month	Title	Publisher
FEBRUARY '03		
7 Feb	ATV: Off Road Fury 2	Sony
7 Feb	Vexx	Acclaim
14 Feb	Midnight Club 2	Take 2
14 Feb	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway Wanted!
14 Feb	Robotech: Battlecry	TDK
14 Feb	The Sims	Electronic Arts
14 Feb	Space Channel 5.2	SEGA
14 Feb	Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness	Eidos
14 Feb	World Racing	TDK
21 Feb	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Kemco
28 Feb	Return To Castle Wolfenstein	Activision
TBC	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	NovaLogic
TBC	Ghost Master	Empire
TBC	Moto GP 3	Sony
TBC	Paris Dakar Rally 2	Acclaim
TBC	Primal	Sony
TBC	Rolling	Rage
TBC	Shinobi	SEGA
TBC	SOCOM: US Navy Seals	Sony
TBC	Vexx	Acclaim

MARCH '03

7 March	Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami Wanted!
7 March	Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft Wanted!
14 March	Rainbow Six: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
21 March	Devil May Cry 2	Capcom Wanted!
21 March	Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter	Vivendi
21 March	Soul Calibur 2	EA Wanted!
28 March	Galleon: Islands Of Mystery	Virgin
28 March	Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts Wanted!
28 March	Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	Vivendi
TBC	Contra: Shattered Soldier	Konami
TBC	DDRMAX Dance Dance Revolution	Konami Wanted!
TBC	Gladius	LucasArts
TBC	The King Of Route 66	SEGA
TBC	Malice: Kat's Tale	Vivendi
TBC	Red Dead Revolver	Capcom
TBC	Suikoden 3	Konami Wanted!
TBC	Tenchu 3: Wrath Of Haven	Activision
TBC	True Crimes: Streets Of L.A.	Activision
TBC	Xenosaga	Electronic Arts
TBC	Zone Of The Enders: The 2nd Runner	Konami Wanted!

APRIL '03

TBC	Club Football	Codemasters
TBC	Dark Chronicle	Sony Wanted!
TBC	Falcone: Into The Maelstrom	Virgin
TBC	RTX Red Rock	Activision
TBC	Wild Arms 3	Sony
TBC	World Championship Snooker	Codemasters
TBC	World Series Baseball 2K3	SEGA

MAY '03

TBC	The Great Escape	SCI
-----	------------------	-----

GAMECUBE

Month	Title	Publisher
FEBRUARY '03		
7 Feb	Legends Of Wrestling 2	Acclaim
7 Feb	Outlaw Golf	TDK
7 Feb	Rally Championship	SCI
7 Feb	Vexx	Acclaim
14 Feb	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway Wanted!
14 Feb	Robotech: Battlecry	TDK
21 Feb	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Kemco
21 Feb	Hunter: The Reckoning	Virgin
28 Feb	Pac-Man World 2	Electronic Arts
28 Feb	Resident Evil Zero	Capcom Wanted!
28 Feb	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubi Soft
TBC	Defender	Midway
TBC	Paris Dakar Rally 2	Acclaim
TBC	Rolling	Rage

MARCH '03

7 March	Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft Wanted!
14 March	Rainbow Six: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
21 March	Haven: Call Of The King	Midway
21 March	Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter	Vivendi
21 March	Soul Calibur 2	EA Wanted!
28 March	Galleon: Islands Of Mystery	Virgin
28 March	World Racing	TDK
TBC	1080°: Avalanche	Nintendo Wanted!
TBC	Evolution Worlds	Ubi Soft
TBC	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos
TBC	Powerpuff Girls: Shock Of Ages	Barn!
TBC	Resident Evil 2	Capcom
TBC	Resident Evil 3: Nemesis	Capcom
TBC	Super Monkey Ball 2	Infogrames Wanted!
TBC	True Crimes: Streets Of L.A.	Activision

APRIL '03

TBC	Conflict: Desert Storm	SCI
TBC	Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo Wanted!

MAY '03

TBC	Black & Bruised	Vivendi
TBC	The Great Escape	SCI
TBC	Shrek Super Party	TDK
TBC	Wario World	Nintendo

XBOX

Month	Title	Publisher
FEBRUARY '03		
7 Feb	Racing Evoluzione	Infogrames
7 Feb	Vexx	Acclaim
7 Feb	World Racing	TDK
14 Feb	DOA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball	Microsoft Wanted!
14 Feb	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway
21 Feb	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Kemco
21 Feb	House Of The Dead 3	Infogrames
28 Feb	Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers	Electronic Arts
28 Feb	Return To Castle Wolfenstein	Activision
TBC	Defender	Midway
TBC	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	NovaLogic

CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES

1080": Avalanche GC Can Nintendo better the excellent original?

Kameo Xbox
How will Rare fare on Microsoft's hardware?

Panzer Dragoon Orta Xbox
Another delay sees *Panzer Dragoon Orta* slip back to March.

Super Monkey Ball 2
GameCube Will there be any extras in the UK version due in March?

TBC	Paris Dakar Rally 2	Acclaim
TBC	Rolling	Rage

MARCH '03

7 March	Beach Soccer	Wanadoo
7 March	Capcom VS SNK: EO	Capcom
7 March	Kung Fu Chaos	Microsoft
7 March	Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami
7 March	Midtown Madness 3	Microsoft
7 March	Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft Wanted!
14 March	Rainbow Six: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
21 March	Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter	Vivendi
21 March	Malice: Kat's Tale	Vivendi
21 March	Soul Calibur 2	EA Wanted!
28 March	Brute Force	Microsoft
28 March	Galleon: Islands Of Mystery	Virgin
28 March	Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts Wanted!
28 March	Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	Vivendi
28 March	Psychonauts	Microsoft
28 March	SW: Knights Of The Old Republic	LucasArts
28 March	Teo Feng	Microsoft
28 March	Toca: Race Driver	Codemasters Wanted!
28 March	Tork	Microsoft
TBC	Crimson Skies 3	Microsoft
TBC	Gladius	LucasArts
TBC	Kameo: Elements Of Power	Microsoft Wanted!
TBC	Lamborghini	Rage
TBC	Ninja Gaiden	Microsoft Wanted!
TBC	Panzer Dragoon Orta	Infogrames Wanted!
TBC	Shenmue 2	SEGA
TBC	Steel Battalion	Capcom Wanted!
TBC	ToeJam & Earl III	SEGA Wanted!
TBC	True Crimes: Streets Of L.A.	Activision
TBC	V-Rally 3	Infogrames

APRIL '03

TBC	Club Football	Codemasters
TBC	Falcone: Into The Maelstrom	Virgin
TBC	Kakuto Chojin	Microsoft
TBC	Kameo	Microsoft Wanted!
TBC	World Championship Snooker	Codemasters

MAY '03

TBC	The Great Escape	SC
-----	------------------	----

PC

Month	Title	Publisher
FEBRUARY '03		
7 Feb	Project IGI 2: Covert Strike	Codemasters
7 Feb	Star Trek Elite Forces 2	Activision
7 Feb	Vietcong	Take 2
14 Feb	Championship Manager 4	Eidos Wanted!
14 Feb	Midnight Club 2	Take 2
14 Feb	Tomb Raider: Angel Of Darkness	Eidos
21 Feb	Command & Conquer Generals	Electronic Arts
21 Feb	Dragon's Lair 3D	Ubi Soft
TBC	Defender	Midway
TBC	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	NovalLogic
TBC	Ghost Master	Empire

TBC	NASCAR Racing 2003 Season	Vivendi
TBC	Shadow Of Memories	Konami

MARCH '03

7 March	Beach Soccer	Wanadoo
7 March	Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami
7 March	Unreal 2: The Awakening	Infogrames
14 March	Rainbow Six: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
28 March	Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	Vivendi
28 March	Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts Wanted!
28 March	Star Wars Galaxies	LucasArts Wanted!
28 March	Toca: Race Driver	Codemasters Wanted!

APRIL '03

TBC	World Championship Snooker	Codemasters
-----	----------------------------	-------------

MAY '03

02 May	Heaven And Hell	CDV
--------	-----------------	-----

GBA

Month	Title	Publisher
FEBRUARY '03		
7 Feb	Vexx	Acclaim
14 Feb	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway
28 Feb	Crash Bandicoot 2: N-Tranced	Vivendi
TBC	ATV: Quad Power Racing 2	Acclaim
TBC	Medal Of Honor: Underground	Zoo
TBC	Rolling	Rage

MARCH '03

7 March	Beach Soccer	Wanadoo
14 March	Bomberman Max Blue	Vivendi
14 March	Bomberman Max Red	Vivendi
TBC	Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo Wanted!
TBC	Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
TBC	Toca World Touring Cars	Ubi Soft

APRIL '03

TBC	Altered Beast: Guardian Of The Realms	THQ
TBC	Crazy Taxi: Catch A Ride	SEGA
TBC	Phantasy Star Collection	SEGA
TBC	The Revenge Of Shinobi	THQ
TBC	Road Rash: Jailbreak	Zoo
TBC	Shaun Murray's Pro Wakeboarder	Activision
TBC	Space Channel 5: Ula-la's Cosmic Attack	THQ
TBC	Yu-Gi-Oh! The Immortal Duelist Soul	Konami

MAY '03

TBC	GT Advance 3: Pro Concept Racing	THQ
-----	----------------------------------	-----

PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, please bear in mind that they are liable to change at short notice. It's not our fault, really it isn't. Blame market forces. Blame the capricious whim of the publishers. But don't blame us, we tried really hard...

games™ ON THE HORIZON

XIII

Format: GameCube, PC, PS2, Xbox

Publisher: Ubi Soft

Okay, so it's been delayed again – this time until September. Even so, we still can't wait for this striking first-person shooter. There's no disputing that developers are over-using cel-shading in their games at the moment, but with *XIII* it's actually used incredibly well and ties in with the original *XIII* comic books.



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

Format: Xbox

Publisher: Microsoft

Project Gotham Racing has been one of the biggest selling Xbox games so far. Not surprising, perhaps, when you take into account the astonishingly high production values. *PGR2* looks set to do more of the same, only bigger, better and with new cities to tear around.



F-ZERO

Format: GameCube

Publisher: Nintendo

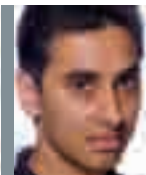
Because of its work on *Super Monkey Ball*, SEGA Amusement Vision is being entrusted with the development of one of Nintendo's biggest franchises – *F-Zero*. From what we've seen, the game looks set to be one of the most graphically demanding (and fun to play) titles on the platform so far.



THINK TANK

THE PEOPLE
IN THE
GAMES
INDUSTRY
TELL IT LIKE
IT IS...

IT'S ABOUT PLEASING
ALL OF THE PEOPLE, ALL
OF THE TIME...



Worldwide, there are fifty million next-gen consoles. Yet many games will struggle to sell fifty thousand copies. Do we

blame the hit-driven nature of the industry? Or pricing strategies? Or, most likely, the fact that the 'same old games' just find the 'same old audience'? And there are lots of people who don't play videogames because they find them too complicated, too inaccessible and perhaps even boring. How do we make gaming more mass-market?

Casual gamers have an appetite for gaming but how can we produce games that excite the casual and hardcore gamers? I believe we need to address some game design basics.

A good start would be to make games simpler and more fun. The key attributes of titles like *Pac-Man* and *Space Invaders* was their simplicity and addictiveness. Now, there seem to be few games with these characteristics, and, from a corporate point of view, it's far safer to update an existing genre.

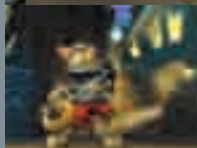
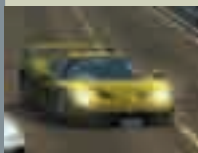
Longevity is also a problem. Twenty years ago I could only last five minutes on *Defender* – and that's still the case now. It's great for making money in arcades but less attractive for a £30 purchase, so we need a way of easing the learning curve so players feel like they're getting real value.

Casual gamers are more receptive to new ideas – but show them a game like *Mario Sunshine* and they'll dismiss it as "the same as the last one". There must be innovation in gaming. We also need more flair and risk taking. Publishers and developers will need to target the casual gamers who are flocking to PS2.

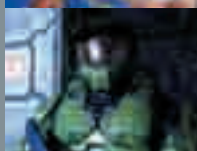
Of course, mass-market games need imaginative marketing to reach their customers. Sadly, most publishers are used to selling the 'same old games' to 'the same old audience'. Things have to change, and fast – otherwise the games industry will miss a huge opportunity.

Nalin Sharma
PuzzleKings

VIETNAM WAS
THE FIRST
TELEVISED
WAR, NOW
IT'S THE
NEXT-GEN
CONSOLES



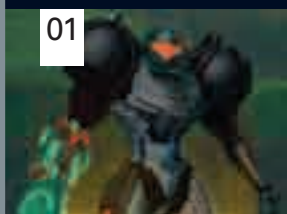
■ There were more adverts for games and consoles this Christmas than ever before.



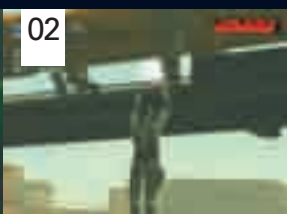
■ More game ads mean less Carol Vorderman – which can only be a good thing.

NO CALM, PLENTY OF STORM

THERE'S LOADS STILL TO COME IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS



01



02



03



04

■ 01: *Metroid Prime* should be a massive seller on GameCube ■ 02: *Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance* could ride high on the success on stealthy-em-ups like *Splinter Cell* ■ 03: *Phantasy Star Online* will let GameCube owners go, er, online (obviously) ■ 04: *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness* sees our comely heroine go all stealthy.

EXPOSURE EXPOSED

GAMING ADVERTS FILL OUR SCREENS
WELL INTO THE NEW YEAR

As gaming becomes a more mainstream pastime, TV adverts appear more and more frequently. In fact, there were almost as many gaming adverts this year as for any other potential gift. One of the most televised ads was for *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*; the notorious crime romp even proclaims its exclusivity after half a minute of tantalising game footage. This may as well be a PlayStation2 console advert, as *Vice City* has probably shifted as many machines as any of Sony's PS2 commercials. *Ratchet And Clank* and *The Getaway* were also plugged heavily – Sony opted to put its money behind these strong titles rather than designated console advertising. Given that the PlayStation brand is already widely renowned, we'd say this was a wise move and one that is supported by high sales figures.

Nintendo and Microsoft took a different stance, opting to focus on their biggest titles for

the year ahead. With Microsoft, this was part of a show-reel containing titles past, present and future, but Nintendo's advertising has been almost entirely based on 2003 releases. With such a quiet Christmas for the GameCube (both in terms of hardware sales and key releases), they really had no choice but to look to the future after *Super Mario Sunshine* and *StarFox Adventures* – the two biggest hopes for the end of 2002 – both performed worse than expected. In fact, Microsoft was, as far as we're aware, the only firm to run hardware television ads – the *Jet Set Radio Future*/SEGA GT 2002 bundle was the subject of several TV spots and it's sold very well.

Christmas as a whole was a case of selling machines off the back of high-profile exclusive titles; *Vice City* on PS2 and *Splinter Cell* on Xbox while GameCube was left with fewer exclusives, which helps explain its disappointing sales.

It's a time that we all dread in the games mag industry – the post-Christmas lull, when there really is very little to write about. In the past, the first quarter of each year has always been relatively quiet on the gaming front but it looks as though 2003 is set to change all that. With over 140 titles planned for the first three months of the year across all console, handheld and PC formats (before you allow for slippage, of course), there's certainly not going to be a shortage of things for you to spend your Christmas cash on. The most important thing to look forward to though is the Easter period; the middle of March signals the launch of online services for both Xbox and PlayStation2, plus the possible (but not confirmed) release of the modem adapter for the GameCube with *Phantasy Star Online*. Online console gaming is a relatively unproven market but this could very well be the moment when all of that changes. Better get those applications for broadband connection in quick, folks...

PIE IN THE SKY

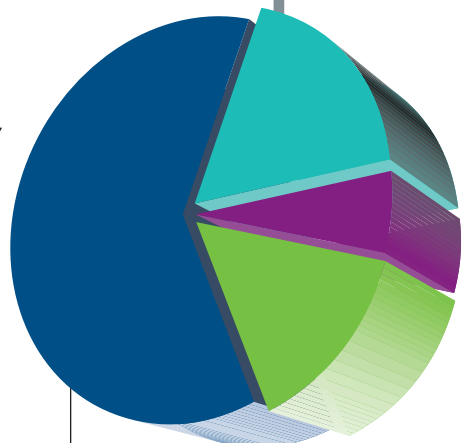
CHRISTMAS 2002 SEES CONSOLE SALES BOOM

Christmas is always the busiest time of the year for the videogames industry and 2002 was no different – hardware sales increased massively during the week ending 7 December. As predicted in *games™* issue 1, it was Sony's PS2 that led the way in terms of units sold, with an enormous 113,862 machines shifted in the UK during that one week alone. Even so, Xbox saw the biggest rise in units sold during the same period, increasing 31% on the previous week to 27,829 machines.

The sudden interest in Xbox comes as no surprise, of course. Along with a number of aggressive TV ad campaigns, the temporary exclusivity deal with Ubi Soft's *Splinter Cell* and two great value bundles available, the Xbox package was incredibly desirable. For less than £200, shoppers could pick up an Xbox console, *Jet Set Radio Future*, *SEGA GT 2002*, *Halo: Combat Evolved* and *Splinter Cell*, which really is astonishing value for money. In fact, buying the contents separately would normally cost £340.

But despite all of Microsoft's efforts, Xbox really couldn't compete with sales of PS2. Apart from the fact that the PlayStation brand name is better-known than either of its rivals, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* and, to a lesser extent, *The Getaway* were no doubt the deciding factors that made many shoppers choose PS2 over the competition. We suspect that Microsoft is kicking itself for letting Sony get the exclusive on *GTA*.

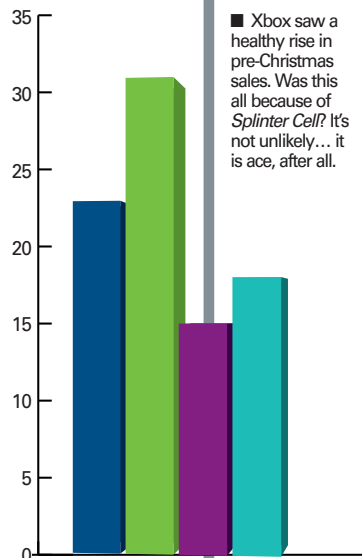
As for Nintendo, while GBA sales picked up during the first week of December, GameCube didn't make anywhere near as much noise as Nintendo wanted. Although *Super Mario Sunshine*, *StarFox Adventures* and *Mario Party 4* were quality releases, their style did little to contradict Nintendo's 'kiddie' image. The problem now is that while a range of new quality titles such as *Metroid Prime* and *Zelda: The Wind Waker* are due this year, some retailers may have already downscaled their focus on the console as a result of disappointing Christmas sales. Let's just hope they reconsider...



CONSOLE SALES
(Week ending Dec 7 2002)

PlayStation2:	62%
113,862 units	
GBA:	18%
32,345 units	
Xbox:	14%
27,829 units	
GameCube:	6%
11,531 units	
Xbox:	31%
PlayStation2:	23%
GBA:	18%
GameCube:	15%

INCREASE ON PREVIOUS WEEK



■ Xbox saw a healthy rise in pre-Christmas sales. Was this all because of *Splinter Cell*? It's not unlikely... it is ace, after all.

UK MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	The Getaway	SCEE	PS2
2	GTA: Vice City	Take 2	PS2
3	Harry Potter & The Chamber Of Secrets	EA Games	PS2, GC, Xbox, PC, PSone, GBA
4	FIFA 2003	EA Sports	PS2, GC, Xbox, PC, PSone, GBA
5	James Bond 007: Nightfire	EA Games	PS2, GC, Xbox, PC
6	Lord Of The Rings: TTT	EA Games	PS2, GBA
7	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	Xbox
8	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	PS2, GC, Xbox, GBA
9	WWE Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth	THQ	PS2
10	Pro Evolution Soccer 2	Konami	PS2

■ Well, would you Adam and Eve it? Obviously, all that time in development has done the world of good for *The Getaway*, as the game jumped straight in at the top spot. Or maybe it was all that advertising that Sony did... In any case, the sure-fire Christmas number one that was *GTA: Vice City* turned out to be an also-ran – bet you never saw that one coming, eh?



All information is compiled by ChartTrack and is the strict copyright of ELSPA (UK) Ltd. UK Multiformat Sales Charts (w/e Sat Dec 14, 2002)





A + C + G + T = 1



A

T

C

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	-----

THE EVOLUTION OF GAMING REINVENTING A GENRE

PART TWO

IS IT AN RPG OR AN ADVENTURE? MAYBE IT'S A PLATFORM GAME? THESE DAYS, IT'S OFTEN HARD TO TELL

THERE WAS ONCE A TIME when a consumer knew exactly what they were buying; *Sonic* was clearly a platform game, *Fifa* was obviously a sports title and *Street Fighter* needed no introduction at all. So what happened? When did genres begin to merge to such an extent that they've now become almost indistinguishable from one another? And what has happened to previously popular genres such as the scrolling beat-'em-up?

Well, categorizing games has always been something of a tricky task. Take *Pong*, for example – was it a puzzle or a sports game? Derivatives such as *Breakout* leaned more heavily towards the puzzle side of things, but then tennis games have also borrowed substantially from the formula over the years. Of course, the fact that *Pong* was one of the first ever videogames meant the genres hadn't really been defined. It was only when the industry was a little more established that the occasional game started to stand out because it didn't quite fit in.

Back in the early days, titles would sometimes feature a blend of different genres, and the ones that did were usually identified as such. It was fairly common to see a game labelled as Action/Adventure or Action/RPG, and though a few titles were still listed as being one thing, they actually offered a whole lot more. Konami's *Goemon* (*Legend Of The Mystical Ninja*) was one of those games. Although it was usually touted as an RPG, a large percentage of what went on was actually standard side-scrolling platforming. On top of that there were numerous puzzle mini-games that could be played purely for fun or to earn money that could be spent on all the usual RPG items.

The main difference between then and now though, is that these days elements from different genres are included in almost every title released, as opposed to just the odd one or two. Even the good old football game is being expanded to include strategy and RPG-like features. Konami's *Pro Evolution* series, for instance, has gradually evolved from a straightforward football game into a fairly comprehensive footie management sim, complete with all the stats that any football fan could wish for. Then there are games like *Splinter Cell* that feature a blend of many

J

L

THE EVOLUTION OF GAMING: PART TWO

"THESE DAYS, ELEMENTS FROM DIFFERENT GENRES ARE INCLUDED IN ALMOST EVERY TITLE RELEASED"

▷ different genres; elements of shooting, strategy, adventure and even platforming have been skilfully bound together by Ubi Soft's Montreal studio, resulting in something that, at a glance at least, appears quite unlike anything else.

INTO THE THIRD DIMENSION

So when did this current trend for merging genres begin? Well, the evolution of 3D graphics over the past few years seems to have had a lot to do with it. Back in 1999, Neversoft changed people's perception of sports games forever when it released *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*. It wasn't the first extreme sports game to feature skateboarding of course – *California Games* (amongst others) had brought the sport to the world of videogames many years previously. But, thanks to the 3D capabilities of the PSone, Neversoft was able to bring the sport to life much more successfully than ever before. It did this by not only including a comprehensive range of skateboarding moves and professional skateboarders, but also by borrowing heavily from the structure of *Mario 64* (which had been released three years previously).

In fact, as the *Tony Hawk* franchise has matured, more and more platform-esque elements have been implemented. The latest game in the series features many tasks that require locating and collecting items, much in the same way that Mario collects stars in *Mario 64*. And working your way up to the roof of Alcatraz prison isn't at all dissimilar to scaling the mountain in *Mario 64*'s first level, Bobomb Battlefield. Of course, Neversoft has cleverly

stylised everything so that it still feels like skateboarding, even though a lot of the content could work just as well in a platform game.

Although the introduction of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* has taken the sports genre in new directions, *Mario 64* was one title that really did re-invent a genre. When Nintendo was developing the game, it discovered that creating worlds in 3D was considerably more time-consuming than in 2D. The designers needed to come up with a way of increasing longevity without upping the number of levels. By adding multiple objectives to the levels, each one needed to be played though more than once, thus increasing the game's lifespan without the need for more production time. It was also one of the first 3D adventure games to feature a highly intuitive control system. Compared to the decidedly clunky feeling of Lara Croft on a digital D-pad, controlling Mario with the N64's analogue stick was like a dream come true. Unsurprisingly, almost every subsequent platform game has been influenced by *Mario 64*.

But while occasional titles such as *Mario 64* have completely changed the direction of their respective genres, the evolution of other genres has gone without such obvious transformations. Racing games, for example, haven't really changed a great deal since their inception over 25 years ago.

Even so, there have been a few interesting additions to the genre along the way. Polyphony's *Gran Turismo* must surely get most of the credit for setting new standards for realism, as well as offering the most comprehensive collection of cars and upgrades ever in a racing simulation. Even with these



PLATFORM

BEFORE



Until the arrival of *Mario 64* in 1996, platform games were usually a simple case of getting from A to B without falling down a hole – a concept that doesn't work quite so well when shifted into 3D. Of course, building 3D worlds is horribly time-consuming so, to reduce development time, Nintendo introduced the idea of fewer levels with multiple objectives in each. This feature has since been used time and time again in almost every platform game.

AFTER



BEFORE



Until 1993, Capcom and SNK pretty much ruled the beat-'em-up market. *Street Fighter* had become huge worldwide thanks to success in the arcades and on the SNES and, although SNK's titles generally weren't as well-known, in Japan they were generating a healthy profit. Meanwhile, the power of computer technology was increasing and, apparently out of nowhere, SEGA's *Virtua Fighter* arrived. Although the game provoked mixed responses, it changed the industry's perception of the genre forever.

BEAT-'EM-UP

AFTER



SHOOT-'EM UP

BEFORE



It's hard to compare the shoot-'em-ups of today to the scrolling variation that was popular 15 years ago because the differences are so great. The majority of current shoot-'em-ups tend to have a first-person point of view and involve exploring expansive environments, occasionally using stealth tactics. While *Doom* wasn't the first FPS, it was the one that made the industry sit up and take notice. Without it, monumental titles such as *GoldenEye*, *Halo* and even *Metroid Prime* may never have existed.

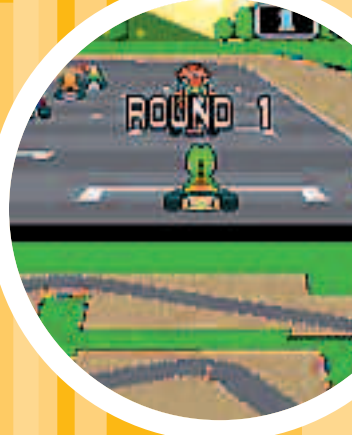
AFTER



RACING

While some genres have seen the introduction of titles that drastically change the direction in which they're heading, the racing and driving genre has had a fairly smooth evolution from where it started to where we are today. It's also one of the few genres that has many obvious sub-genres, from rally driving to Formula 1 to street racing and so on.

And that's before you've taken into account the likes of *Super Mario Kart*, *WipEout*, *Micro Machines* and all the other fantasy-based titles that have been introduced through the years. Some gamers may not be fond of certain types of games, but the racing genre is one so broad that it really does include something for everyone. Even non-drivers...



THE EVOLUTION OF GAMING: PART TWO

"IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE HOW CERTAIN GENRES ARE ADAPTED TO WORK BETTER IN AN ONLINE MULTIPLAYER ENVIRONMENT"

▷ features though, the actual driving dynamics didn't really offer a new experience to the player. Then, of course, there was Nintendo's *Super Mario Kart* which not only took racing games off on a tangent, but also spawned a huge selection of copycat titles.

It doesn't take a genius to notice that sports, adventure and racing games continue to go from strength to strength, but enthusiasm for beat-'em-ups (which were once just as popular) has been dwindling recently. This probably has a lot to do with the decline of the arcade industry, though the lack of originality injected by developers over the last couple of years is undoubtedly a contributing factor. It's amazing to think that after the ingenuity shown by Capcom with *Power Stone* (its largely forgotten Dreamcast fighting game), no other developer has tried anything near as groundbreaking. Just look at Namco's market-leading *Tekken* series – the upgrades to *Tekken 4* were so slight that it's debatable whether it was worth developing the game at all.

But the one-on-one fighting game is positively thriving compared to the good old scrolling beat-'em-up. In the past, titles such as *Final Fight* and *Streets Of Rage* were key titles for their publishers, though now they're nowhere to be seen. Could it be that we've actually witnessed the death of a genre? Well... no, actually. You see, not only does the occasional scrolling beat-'em-up still come along from time to time (see *Shinobi* on page 112), but there are many other current titles that feature the essence of the genre within something a little more in-depth. Take *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* – it may be classed as an adventure game, though more than

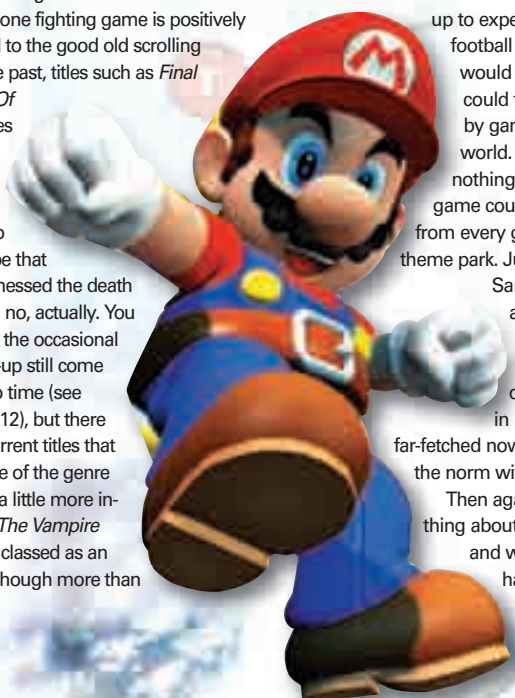
50 per cent of the action is essentially a scrolling beat-'em-up. Even online RPGs such as *Phantasy Star Online* have parallels – especially to titles such as *Golden Axe*.

MERGE INTO THE FUTURE

So, where will this amalgamation of genres lead us? It's a good question and one that's almost impossible to answer right now. One thing that looks certain to affect the direction of videogame genres over the next few years is the introduction of online gaming as a mainstream feature for each of the three major consoles. It will be interesting to see how certain genres are adapted to work better in an online multiplayer environment. A few years ago, Namco created a PSone football game called *Liberio Grande* in which the player took control of a single footballer, with the rest of the team controlled by the CPU. Sadly, the hardware struggled to run such an advanced program and, with a lack of decent AI, the title failed to live up to expectations. But, as an online football game, *Liberio Grande* would be ideal, as each footballer could theoretically be controlled by gamers from anywhere in the world. But why stop there? There's nothing to suggest that an online game couldn't include an example from every genre in a sort of online theme park. Just imagine driving around

San Francisco in a crazy taxi and seeing other players fighting on the rooftops, enjoying a game of tennis or avoiding giant monkeys in plastic balls. It may sound far-fetched now, but such a thing could be the norm within a few years.

Then again, people said the same thing about virtual reality headsets, and we all know what happened there...



RPG

BEFORE

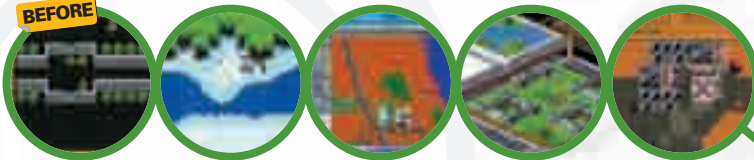


While the majority of Japanese RPGs haven't really evolved that much as far as gameplay goes over the past few years, Nintendo's *Zelda: The Ocarina Of Time* proved (as *Mario 64* did for platform games) that the RPG genre could work just as well in a fully 3D environment. Since that time, the rise in online gaming has given birth to a new type of RPG – the Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game, or MMORPG as it is more commonly (and conveniently) known.

AFTER



BEFORE

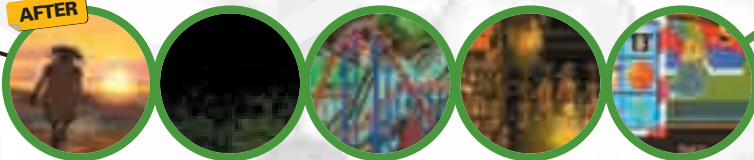


The strategy genre is one that continually does well, despite the fact that it never generates the same level of hysteria as sports or racing games. Classics such as *Cannon Fodder* were certainly popular in their day, though it was the early 1990s when the genre really seemed to take off. Back then, titles such as *Command & Conquer* were incredibly successful, though in recent years more diverse offerings such as *The Sims* have attracted a brand new audience of their own.

STRATEGY



AFTER



PUZZLE

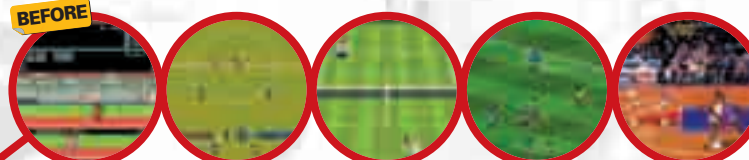
Just like racing games, there hasn't been any one particular moment in time when the puzzle genre drastically changed direction – it too has seen a fairly smooth evolution to the present day. However, while there haven't been any obvious breakthrough titles over the years, many other types of games have included puzzle elements. Not surprising, perhaps, when you consider that games (both electronic and traditional) most probably stemmed from ancient puzzles and riddles.

But, while the basic puzzle genre would seem a little less mainstream than it once was, titles such as *Dance Dance Revolution* and *Mario Party* (which aren't strictly puzzle games, but certainly have parallels with the genre) are now extremely popular.



SPORTS

BEFORE



Apart from the inclusion of 3D visuals, *FIFA 2003* doesn't really offer that much more than *FIFA '95* did on the Mega Drive. The same applies to basketball, tennis and hockey games – it's been a smooth evolution to where we are today. However, the introduction of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* in 1999 took the sports genre in an exciting new direction. Since then, there have been many similar titles spanning a range of extreme sports from skateboarding and rollerblading to surfing and wakeboarding.

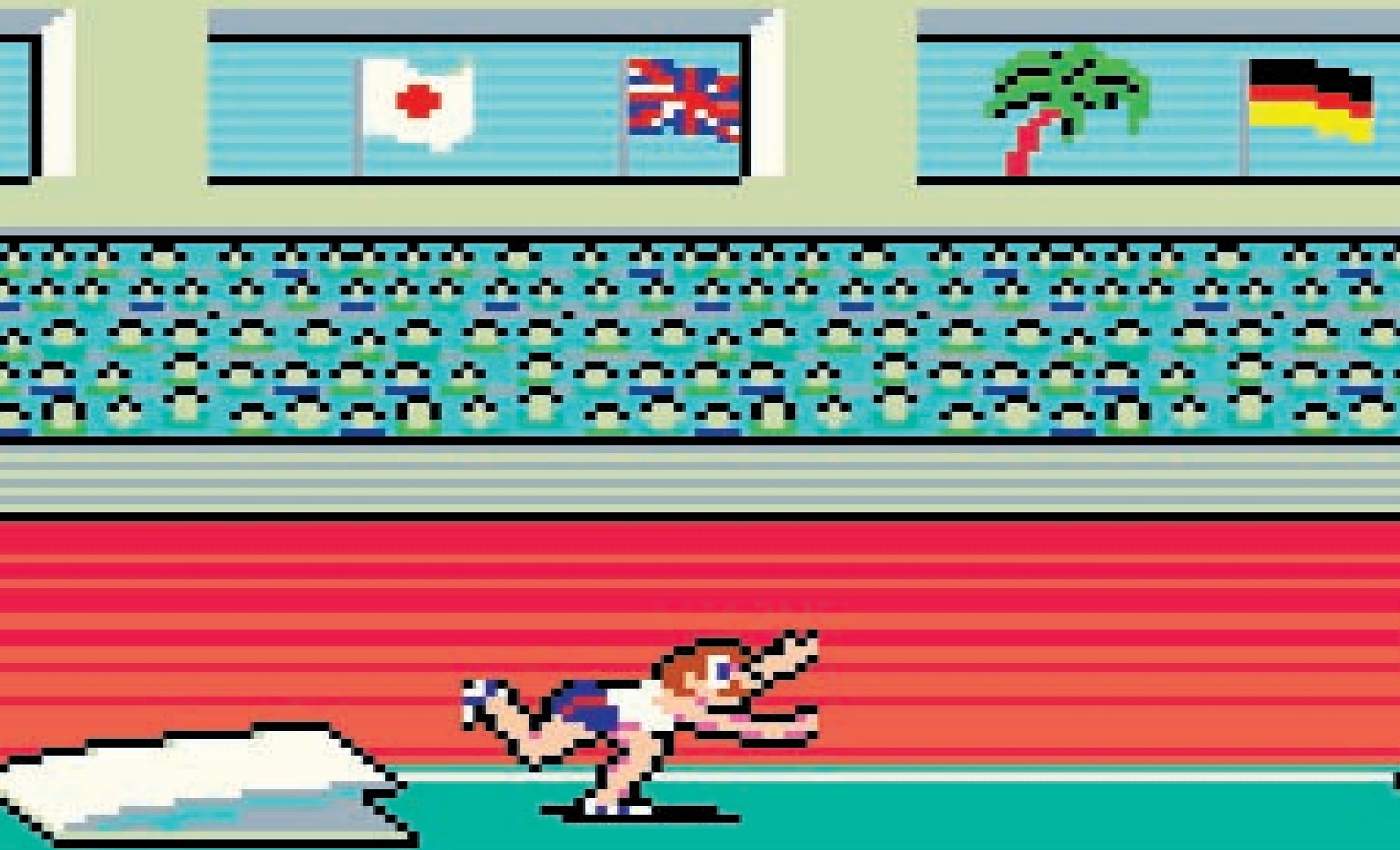
AFTER



1P MLM

SCORE
17300

He's stumbled, what a poor show from the young man... Hyper Sports Arcade [Konami] 1984



SPEED



1ST → 1P MLM

0.0

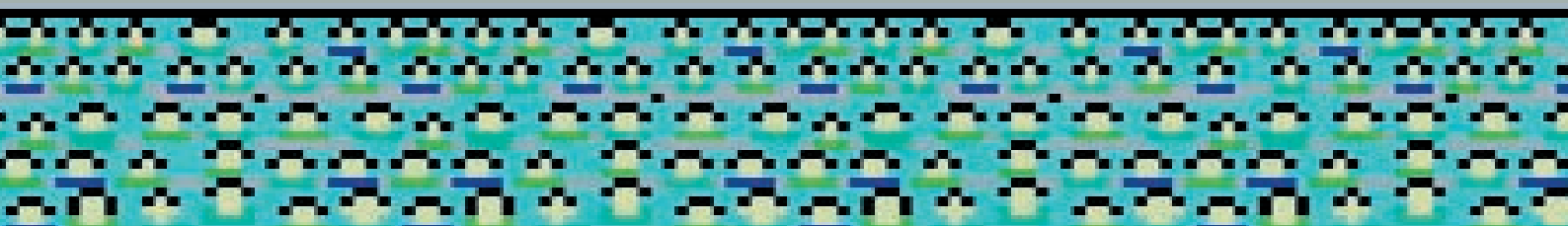
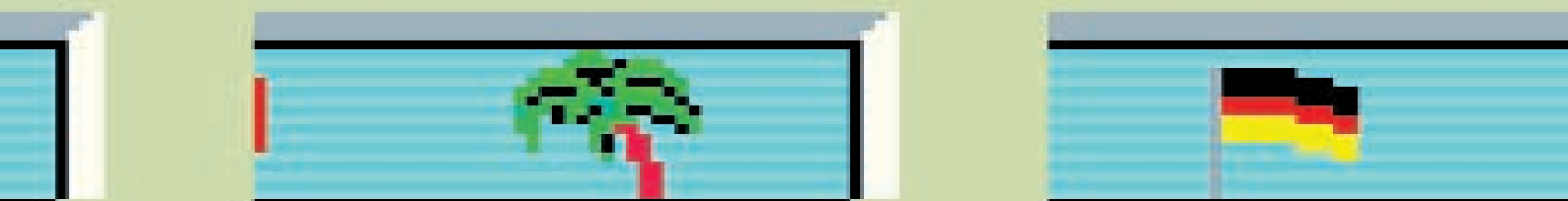
2ND

3RD

4TH

WORLD RECORD

1ST	9:50	LLL
2ND	9:45	MMM
3RD	9:40	NNN



1100 cm/sec

0X

QUALIFY
1STTRY
2NDTRY
3RDTRY

8.60
FOUL

NETWORK BIOHAZARD

WHAT'S THIS? A RESIDENT EVIL TITLE THAT'S NOT EXCLUSIVE TO GAMECUBE?

PS2 It came as a surprise to the entire videogame industry when Nintendo and Capcom announced that their *Biohazard* series (*Resident Evil* in the West) was to become GameCube exclusive. PlayStation2 was selling in huge quantities and, seeing as how *Onimusha* and *Devil May Cry* had been successful around the world, it was strange that Capcom should want to limit one of its most prolific licences to a format with a lower installed base. Apparently, the decision was due mainly to the fact that *Biohazard* creator Shinji Mikami found the GameCube development tools more user-friendly than PS2's, allowing him greater control over the creative process. But a short while after the contract was made public, details of a brand new *Biohazard* game quietly slipped out of Capcom's Japanese headquarters – a *Biohazard* game exclusive to PS2. Quite how Capcom has got round the GameCube exclusivity deal is unclear, though it's apparent that Shinji Mikami isn't involved in this project in any way.

So far, in-depth details of the content of *Network Biohazard* remain sketchy, though a few tasty morsels of information have begun to filter through. For starters, there will be a choice of eight playable characters, each a civilian from Raccoon City rather than members of the S.T.A.R.S. team. They are: Kevin, George, Yoko, Mark, Cindy, David, Jim and Alyssa – each with

their own personality, strengths and weaknesses. Kevin, for example, is a member of the Raccoon City Police Department and is extremely strong. Jim, a worker on the Raccoon City subway system, is outspoken and knows the city well, while journalist Alyssa is hot-tempered and may be more suited to riddle-solving than some of the others.

Although eight characters are included, only four people can play online simultaneously, with the other characters controlled by the CPU. Capcom assures us that the artificial intelligence will be top-notch and that those taking part won't be able to distinguish between the human- and CPU-controlled characters. This is a massive claim and one that, judging by the quality of the AI in most games, won't be fulfilled. Still, the quality of Capcom's recent products suggests that the company is becoming extremely well-versed in 3D design, so we'll reserve proper judgement until the game is released later in the year.

The idea of playing *Biohazard* online is certainly intriguing and should offer something a little different for fans of the series. All the action takes place in the heart of Raccoon City itself and this, combined with a story that links *Biohazard 2* and *Biohazard 3*, should result in some interesting scenarios. That said, Capcom has already made it quite clear that this won't be a simple case of destroying

enemies whilst having a chat, as is the case with *Phantasy Star Online*. Instead, progression will be structured in much the same way as the regular *Biohazard* titles which, theoretically, may make things a little more linear than we'd like, but should also help to get round a few of the problems associated with online gaming.

If it all goes according to plan, there'll be less aimless wandering and more puzzle-solving and adventure elements. The only other question is whether this structured approach will decrease the longevity and replay factor in any way at all. Hopefully, all our questions will be answered very soon.



DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: TBA
 (Japan: TBC/
 US: TBA)
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-4
 (online)

■ *Resident Evil* goes online. Team up with other players to escape the horrors of Raccoon City.

A WORK OF ART

Looking at these screenshots, it's easy to dismiss the graphics as the same 2D pre-renders used in *Biohazard* and *Biohazard Zero* on GameCube. However, closer inspection suggests that, for this outing, much of Raccoon City and its suburbs has been constructed out of polygons. When you consider that *Network Biohazard* is online and involves interaction between many more characters, we'll be amazed if Capcom has been able to squeeze so much out of the PS2. Everything is crisp and sharp, and the quality and number of textures being used is astonishing. Of course, there is a chance that this level of detail will mean that other areas of the game suffer as a result. The frame rate, for example, may be horribly inconsistent. Judging by Capcom's heritage though, *Network Biohazard* should be every bit as good as it looks here.

■ It's quite likely that each character will have unique attributes.



COMPANY PROFILE

■ Nearly a decade ago, Capcom was best known for creating *Street Fighter 2*. However, since releasing *Resident Evil* on PSone, the company has become famous for re-inventing the survival horror game. Other highlights include the *Power Stone* games on Dreamcast and the stylish Samurai adventure, *Onimusha*.

HISTORY

- **AUTO MODELLISTA** 2002 [PlayStation2]
- **RESIDENT EVIL** 2002 [GameCube]
- **ZELDA: ORACLE OF AGES** 2001 [GBC]

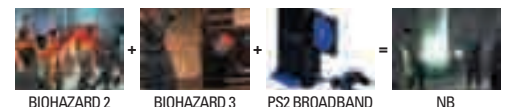
■ All the usual atmospheric lighting is already in place to make it all seem that little bit more eerie.

"THE BIOHAZARD GAMES HAVE A MASSIVE FAN BASE AND IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS FOR US TO CHANGE THE CONTROLS DRASTICALLY"

TATSUYA MINAMI, CAPCOM

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

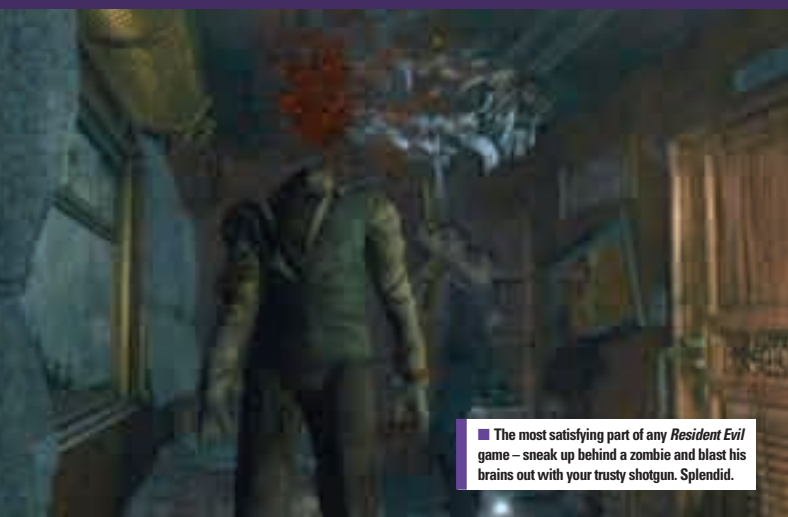
MESSING AROUND WITH NETWORK BIOHAZARD



■ Early code suggests that all sorts of items can be used as weapons. Hit his mind out!

■ It's still unclear whether the animation will be reworked, though the typical foot-munching is still in there at the moment.

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO



■ The most satisfying part of any *Resident Evil* game – sneak up behind a zombie and blast his brains out with your trusty shotgun. Splendid.



■ It's no surprise to find that where there's a moose head hung on the wall, there's also a hidden (and incredibly useful) item to be had.

“THE DOOR TO SAFETY IS SHUT... THERE IS NO TURNING BACK.” REALLY, THERE ISN'T.

Games will come and games will go, but *Resident Evil* stays the same – at least, that's what our mothers used to say (sort of). When it came out 1996, we doubt anyone could have foreseen just how big the *Resident Evil* concept was going to become, spawning everything from comics, movies and spin-offs like *Dino Crisis* on top of actual sequels. However, you might have thought that we could expect a little evolution over the years, just to keep the series fresh, you understand. That's why the anticipated release of *Resident Evil Zero* is set to be a breath of fresh air to the Survival Horror genre, even though, at first glance, it just looks like the same thing all over again.

While you might not see it from these screens, a number of important changes have been made to *RE Zero*'s structure. The most obvious new facet is the much-vaunted Partner Zapping system that allows you to switch control between lead characters Rebecca Chambers and Billy Coen at any time (an idea suited to the original N64 incarnation of *RE Zero* thanks to the absence of loading times). You'll have to change characters during the game for all manner of reasons and even split them up on occasion. For example, if Rebecca gets trapped, it's up to Billy to find a way out; or if there's a lift that can only carry one person at a time, someone has to stay behind to operate it. Even when

you're working together, you'll have to keep a close eye on what the other person is doing (especially when fending off zombies), but if you find yourself needing to control both characters at once it's a simple case of using the Analogue Stick for the lead and the C-stick for your partner.

Although Partner Zapping is the one change that everyone knows about, there are others that, while not quite as drastic, still play an important role in how the game progresses. For instance, Capcom has removed the magical item boxes from the game, which means you have to be far more tactical about how you manage your inventory. To compensate for the loss though, there are now two new ways for you to offload items. If Rebecca and Billy are near each other, they can exchange objects and weapons or, if push comes to shove, you can just drop unwanted items on the floor. Naturally, anything you drop can be picked up again when you need it, but with only six item-slots available per character (with some of the better weapons taking up two slots or more), you'll need to keep track of how much space you've got free.

Of course, the most interesting thing about *RE Zero* is where it fits into *Resident Evil*'s grand scheme. Rather than awkwardly elbowing in between the other games, this latest chapter in the story is actually the granddaddy of them all. So, does that mean we'll finally discover how

the mansion incident happened, who unleashed the T-Virus in Raccoon City and, most importantly of all, why Albert Wesker is such a git? Probably. From what we can tell so far, the reasons behind the T-Virus outbreak are far more complicated than we ever thought – and we've only been playing it long enough to escape from the train and make it to relative safety. Needless to say, we're already preparing to jump behind the sofa – no doubt you will be too when the game lands over here this March.



DETAILS

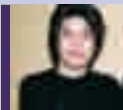
FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: 8 March '03 (Japan/US: Out Now)
GENRE: Survival Horror
PLAYERS: 1

■ Capcom gives us more zombies, shotguns and plenty of gore. Nice.

TWO BECOME ONE

Most of the time you're able to explore the game as a pair or alone (it's up to you), but there are several situations where Billy and Rebecca have to work together. Sometimes, this involves helping each other using their individual abilities – for example, Billy's strength lets him crank up a large metal cage on a chain, allowing Rebecca to run under it and grab the item within. At other times, the pair have to help each other from afar; to stop the train, for instance, they have to simultaneously operate two panels placed at either end of the train. Thankfully, controlling the characters in these circumstances is incredibly easy and is very gratifying when you get it right.

“RE ZERO ALREADY HAS THE EDGE OVER THE REMAKE OF THE ORIGINAL – YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S COMING...”



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Despite looking incredibly young, Tatsuya Minami has had quite an illustrious career at Capcom – so illustrious in fact, that he now holds the position of general manager at the firm's Production Studio 3. He's been responsible for some classic titles including the original *Ghosts 'N' Goblins* and the *MegaMan X* series.

HISTORY

- **CLOCK TOWER 3** 2002 [PS2]
- **MEGAMAN X** 1992 [SNES]
- **GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS** 1985 [Arcade]

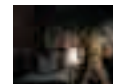
"I HAVE MOVED AWAY FROM HUMANS WHERE I CAN – WE ARE TRYING TO BE MORE ORGANIC WITH THE ENEMIES, SO YOU CAN EXPECT MORE ANIMALS AND PLANTS."

TATSUYA MINAMI, PRODUCER, CAPCOM

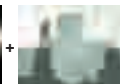
■ These rather nasty eggs play an important part in the storyline – although that doesn't make them any easier to deal with.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

MESSILY DISSECTING RESIDENT EVIL ZERO



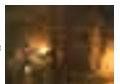
RESIDENT EVIL



ICO



SQUIRM



RE ZERO

■ Rule number one of survival. Don't go down the stairs. Ever.

■ It was tricky finding train drivers for the line to Raccoon City...

MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE

"MORTAL KOMBAT HAS EVOLVED INTO FIGHTING WITH A LOT OF MAGIC SPELLS, TELEPORTS AND PROJECTILES BUT MK:DA IS GOING BACK TO WHAT IT ORIGINALLY STARTED AS: FIGHTING"

ED BOON, LEAD DESIGNER, MIDWAY

■ If it's blood you're after, you can't go wrong with a sword to the face—some of the weapons you can use in the game are just plain brutal...

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

DEADLY ALLIANCE'S SOUL IS OURS



MKII



3D



COMEDY



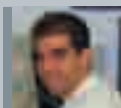
MK:DA



■ Some of the new characters are offshoots from the old games—young Frost, for instance, is a pupil of Sub-Zero.

MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE

GAMECUBE/MULTIFORMAT



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Born in Chicago, Illinois, Ed Boon has been working in Midway's Chicago development office for 16 years. Hired when the firm was known as Williams Electronics, his first job was programming pinball machines. He then went on to develop *High Impact Football* and, after a sequel, moved on to work on *Mortal Kombat*.

HISTORY

- **MORTAL KOMBAT 3** 1995 [Arcade]
- **MORTAL KOMBAT II** 1993 [Arcade]
- **MORTAL KOMBAT** 1992 [Arcade]

LIKE YOUR BEAT-'EM-UPS SERVED EXTRA BLOODY? MIDWAY'S GOT THE DISH FOR YOU...

■ We might have only been young whippersnappers when the original *Mortal Kombat* first landed in our local arcade, but even then we could tell what kind of an impact the game was going to have. On one hand, you had the gamers – flocking around the machine, sharing move lists and pulling off gut-wrenching fatalities without batting an eyelid – and on the other, there were the parents who were 'outraged' that such a game existed. Sure, it wasn't the best fighting game in the world, but controversy guaranteed its popularity – especially when the bigger, better and bloodier sequel came out the following year.

Although the success of *Mortal Kombat II* guaranteed even more follow-ups, they never managed to best *MKII* in terms of gameplay despite innovations like the Run Button, 3D graphics or weapons. But now Midway has decided to bring the series back for one more run (maybe more, depending on how well this title does). Interestingly enough, this is the first game in the *Mortal Kombat* series to be created specifically for home consoles (compilations like *MK Gold* and rubbish platform efforts like *MK Mythologies* aside), rather than being ported from an arcade version. Will it make a difference? Going by what we've played so far, we certainly think so.

While it takes several ideas from all of the previous *MK* games, *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance* has gone back to the

drawing board in an attempt to redefine what the series is all about. Gone are the days of comedy finishers, merciful endings and the chance to give your friends gifts instead of death. Instead, Midway has made sure that this fifth game is darker and nastier than anything you've seen before.

There's a whole new selection of blood-soaked fatality moves to keep you occupied, as well as a suitably evil story, loads of action and, obviously, buckets of blood. The majority of the elements that have been kept are from the rather average *Mortal Kombat 4* – most notably, the use of 3D arenas and weaponry unique to each fighter. This time around though, the weapons are much more flexible in their use and play an important role in each character's fighting style.

If it's improved fighting mechanics and more realistic character models you're after, *MK:DA* has them in spades. Each fighter now has three martial arts-based fighting styles (two hand-to-hand and one weapon-based technique) as well as a bevy of special moves. Changing styles is as easy as pushing a single button, which makes linking moves into one another a piece of cake (and your opponents will have to keep adapting their defences to counter each of your techniques). The biggest enhancement of all though has to be the graphics. Considering how rough the fighters looked in *MK4*, the ones in

MK:DA are a massive improvement. On the Xbox and GameCube versions particularly, each of the combatants (or kombatants, if you want to be picky) look highly detailed and very well animated.

With several modes of play to experience (including an all-new Konquest mode) and a whole ton of hidden bonuses, arenas and other goodies, *MK:DA* is definitely the best game to come from the *Mortal Kombat* stable since the SNES version of *MKII*. We only hope people haven't been put off by the series's recent poor performance.



DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube/PS2/Xbox/GBA
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Midway
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: 14 Feb '03 (US: Out Now)
GENRE: Beat-'em-up
PLAYERS: 1-2

■ This fifth outing in the *MK* series has more blood, weapons and fatalities than ever before.

"AFTER THE LAST FEW EFFORTS, IT'S GOOD TO SEE THAT ONE OF OUR FAVOURITE FIGHTERS HAS RECLAIMED ITS PAST GLORY"

THE FINAL TEST

Anyone who remembers the first *Mortal Kombat* game will recall the cool mini-game that appeared in single-player mode. These Test Your Might sections might have been simple enough (slap the buttons as fast as you can), but trying to shatter each block of material in front of you was still fun. Midway has reintroduced this mini-game along with a new one called Test Your Sight. This one's more about concentration than brute force – can you remember which cup is hiding the dragon crest after they've been shuffled around? Getting it right the first time might be easy, but winning on the highest level (six cups moving at light speed with a rotating camera for company) is a bit trickier...



■ Ah, fatalities – the best part of the *Mortal Kombat* series. Not surprisingly, the ones on offer now are nastier than ever.



■ With three fighting styles for each character, there are loads of moves to remember this time.

INDIANA JONES AND THE

WHO NEEDS LARA CROFT WHEN THERE'S INDIANA JONES, THE ORIGINAL TOMB RAIDER?

Despite being ideally suited to the world of videogames, the *Indiana Jones* licence has never performed particularly well at retail – especially when you take into account just how popular *Tomb Raider* has been over the past few years. *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine* on PC and N64 was the most recent failed attempt – the lateness of its arrival on N64 and the fact that it was completely overshadowed by *Tomb Raider* probably having more to do with its lacklustre performance than the actual quality of the game itself. Even so, LucasArts has decided to take a slightly different approach with its latest Indy title by focusing on a different element of the movies.

In a collaboration with The Collective (the company responsible for *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* on Xbox), LucasArts has reduced the explorative element from the previous *Indy* titles down to around 30 per cent of the game, with the other 70 per cent now taking up beating up Nazis, Triads and all the other bad guys you'd expect to see in an *Indiana Jones* game. Thankfully, this is all done using the *Buffy* game engine, which has been tweaked for many months to guarantee plenty of depth to the combat. Foes can be punched against walls, chairs can be picked up and used as weapons and a variety of *Tekken*-esque combos are on offer. In fact, the length to which the *Buffy* game engine has influenced the creation is astonishing –

complete animation routines have been carried straight across from one title to the other. At this stage in development Indy opens doors, grabs enemies and even climbs walls exactly the same way as *Buffy*. Whether any of these animations will be updated before final release is unclear, though anyone who played *Buffy* will certainly get a strong sense of déjà vu if they're not.

Of course, there are many other Indiana-only features that have been added. Indy's whip, for example, can be used to swing across chasms, strangle villains and even snatch the guns out of enemies' bare hands. And yes, the guns can actually be used, though their inclusion does feel a little tacked-on at the moment. Another area that currently needs attention is the jumping, which can be somewhat inaccurate. It wasn't perfect in *Buffy* either, but life-threatening pitfalls were held back until the later levels, whereas here they're very much part of the proceedings from the outset. There were also numerous connection problems in the early version we played, resulting in incidents where we'd fall to our doom, despite being well within the set boundaries.

Of course, there's still enough time for such issues to be resolved before the game goes gold; the preview version of *Buffy* was similarly flawed just weeks before its release. Even if these problems are adjusted though, it's unlikely that *The Emperor's Tomb* will turn out to be a

classic – after all, *Buffy* was nothing more than a solid, enjoyable game that managed to capture the spirit and humour of the TV show perfectly, much to the appreciation of its fans. From what we've seen so far, *The Emperor's Tomb* looks set to be completed to a similar standard – certainly the style, pacing and atmosphere of the movies are already well-woven into the design. If the last couple of months of development time are used wisely, this could very well turn out to be the most successful *Indiana Jones* game of all time. We shall see.



DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PC, PS2

ORIGIN: US

PUBLISHER: Activision

DEVELOPER: The Collective/
LucasArts

RELEASE: 28 March
(PC & Xbox); Q2 '03
(PS2) (Japan: TBC,
US: Out Now)

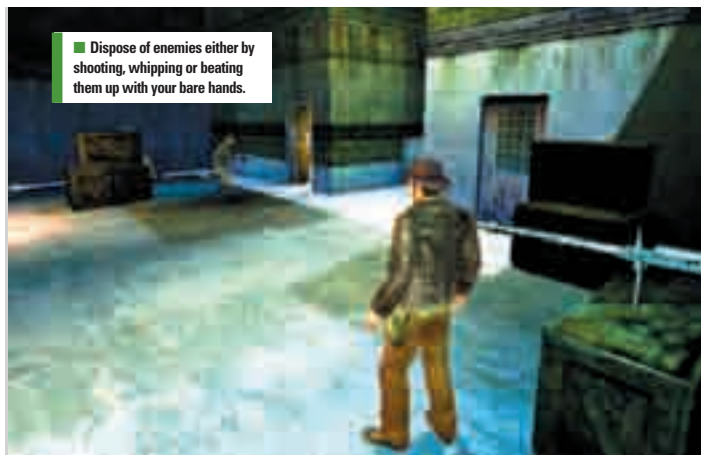
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ Part beat-'em-up, part adventure, *The Emperor's Tomb* looks set to offer just about everything you'd expect from an Indiana Jones game.

TAKE YOUR HAT OFF

The Collective has made Indy as faithful as possible to the movies, right down to getting his Fedora knocked off during brawls. Of course, you can always knock rivals' hats off then wear them yourself if you wish. This feature is taken further, giving you the opportunity to change your entire costume and attempt to infiltrate tricky situations unnoticed. However, at this stage in development the feature is more about visual variety than gameplay, as guards usually spot you despite your disguise. LucasArts assures us that the AI will be improved before release, though the fact that this is essentially a beat-'em-up makes us think that the stealth element won't be integral to the gameplay.

“LUCASARTS HAS DECIDED TO TAKE A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT APPROACH WITH ITS LATEST INDY TITLE”




■ Dispose of enemies either by shooting, whipping or beating them up with your bare hands.



■ The weapons have been styled to look just like the ones used in the films.


EMPEROR'S TOMB



■ Finding ancient artefacts is fraught with danger – even the Nazis are in for a piece of the action.



■ The fighting sections are incredibly in-depth, offering interactive scenery and a comprehensive range of combos.

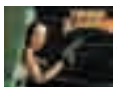


"INDIANA JONES IS BACK IN A BOLD NEW WAY THAT PLAYERS HAVE NEVER SEEN HIM"

TOM BYRON, LUCASARTS

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

IT'S THE REAL TOMB RAIDER



TOMB RAIDER



HARRISON FORD



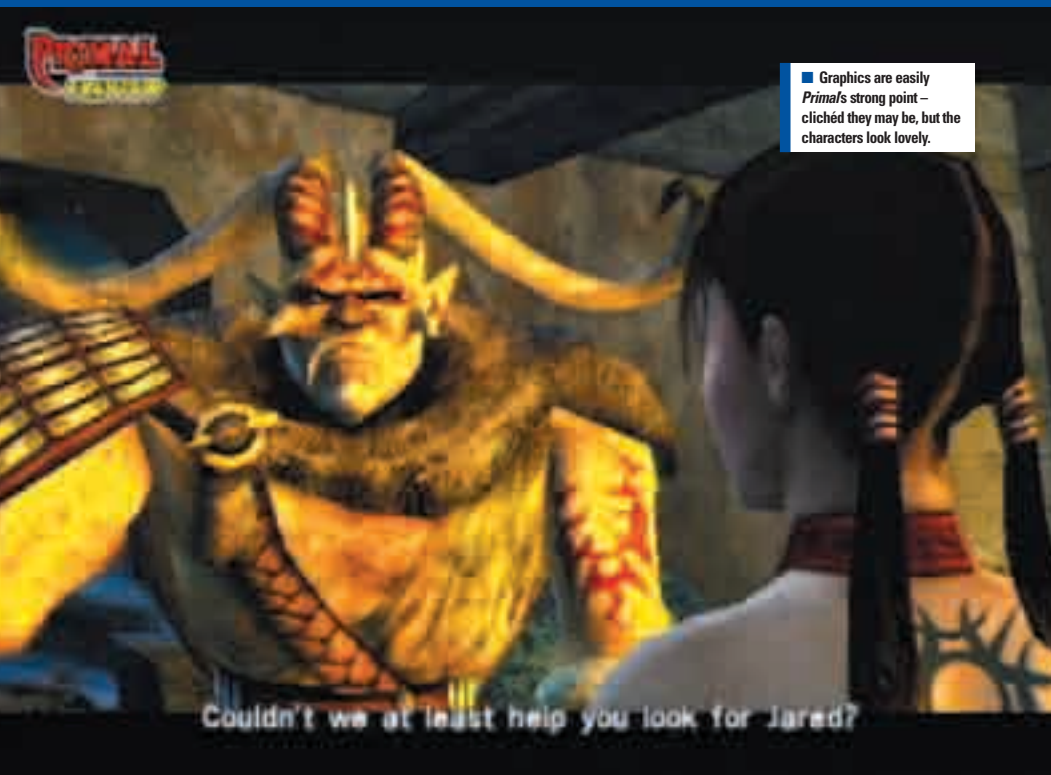
BUFFY



INDIANA JONES

■ Indy can kick a fair amount of ass. Just a shame Harrison Ford can't do it any more. *Indy 4?* No thanks...

PRIMAL



■ Graphics are easily *Primal's* strong point – clichéd they may be, but the characters look lovely.

Couldn't we at least help you look for Jared?

SONY THROWS A SUPERNATURAL ADVENTURE INTO THE RING

DETAILS

FORMAT:

PlayStation2

ORIGIN: Japan

PUBLISHER: SCEE

DEVELOPER:

In-House

RELEASE: February

'03 (Japan/US: TBA)

GENRE: Adventure

PLAYERS: 1

■ Talking gargoyles, ancient races and an epic struggle... a concise fantasy package, then.

"A GREAT CONCEPT BUT CURRENTLY LACKING THE SUBSTANCE OF SOME OF ITS COMPETITORS"

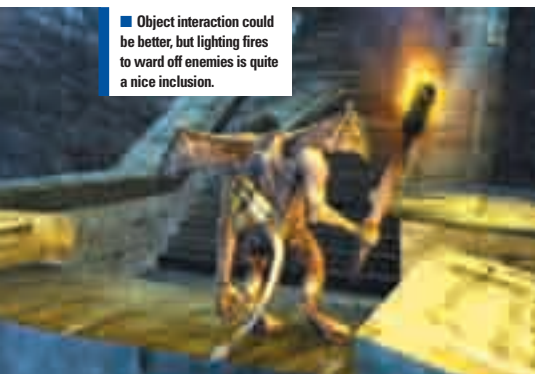
■ It's incredible what variety Sony's in-house development teams produce in their products. One minute you'll be catching escaped apes and the next you'll be committing crimes around the streets of London. This is why *Primal* may come as a surprise to many, because Sony has decided to have a crack at an epic fantasy adventure.

Dragged into a strange land, lead character Jen teams up with a gargoyle by the name of Scree – the player is then free to switch between the two protagonists at any time. Jen is more agile and her slight

frame allows her to slip into places her chunky friend cannot reach, while Scree is able to climb walls and turn into stone to prevent damage. The only way to make progress is to use these unique skills.

From what we've seen, control is fairly limited; jumping, climbing and other actions are all assigned to one context-sensitive button, which limits the feeling of actually being in control. Combat is similar in that it can only be initiated when near to an enemy, and even then the scope is remarkably limited. Only three basic attacks exist, and these seem to be infinitely linkable. Hopefully, these elements will be tweaked and polished for the finished game.

That said, we've already been impressed by *Primal's* presentation. Visually, the game is at least on a par with the best PlayStation2 games and even comes close to rivaling some titles on the more powerful consoles. We're not all that shocked at the polished nature of *Primal* – it's being developed by SCE Studio Cambridge, the same team that created the award-winning *MediEvil* series that squeezed so much out of the PSone. Aside from this visual sheen though, there's not all that much to rave about in *Primal*. After the initial impact of the sumptuous visuals and some nice touches, the game seemed to degenerate into repetitive tasks broken up by questionable combat. We really want to like it but, at the moment, this is no landmark development. With *StarFox* already doing the same thing better on GameCube and Lara set to return next year, it remains to be seen whether *Primal* will be able to live up to Sony's high hopes.



■ Object interaction could be better, but lighting fires to ward off enemies is quite a nice inclusion.



■ Scree can turn into stone to avoid taking damage – the transformations are very impressive.



LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WI

MIYAMOTO-SAN TEACHES THE WORLD TO CONTROL ITS WIND

What's your fondest memory of the last videogaming generation? *Half-Life* perhaps? Or maybe *GoldenEye*? How about *Final Fantasy VII*, *Gran Turismo* or *Metal Gear Solid*? Let's face it, there are many different answers but one thing is for sure – for an awful lot of people, their defining gaming experience saw them exploring dungeons and plummeting back and forth through time courtesy of a magical ocarina. *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* set the standard for the 3D action RPG and, for his next elf-related trick, Shigeru Miyamoto has opted for a marked change in his graphical approach to the game. What has widely been touted as a cel-shaded technique is actually cartoon shading, an effect that allows Link and his fellow Hyrulians to ooze style and character.

Miyamoto-san strongly believes that realism doesn't necessarily come as a result of photo-realistic textures and a true-to-life physics engine, and to truly immerse the player in the new environment he has concentrated on creating extremely accurate expressions and reactions on the characters' faces. We've already played the Japanese version of the game plenty and every time, the little elf has surprised us with the dozens of reactions that he can give to any single situation. Link resembles a small child with his over-expressive face and curious eyes. Indeed, the eyes have been changed many times during the game's lengthy development process so that they're just right. Being able to read

Link's emotions is more than just a novelty addition though; quite often Link will peer in a certain direction to hint at something that may be just out of sight. It may be an item, a grapple point or an approaching enemy – and you'll be able to tell straight away what type of mystery awaits you. For example, an item might get a casual glance whereas a grapple point will earn you a curious peek.

While you might think that the cartoon style would result in a simplistic world, Miyamoto-san's team have used it to their advantage. The cartoon shading means that the in-game environments can get away with a lower polygon count. The extra geometry has been thrown back into the game in the form of leaves, tassels, earrings and loose clothing. All of these items are beautifully modelled and animated – Link's hog-like adversaries wear flowing robes and carry long spears with decorative tassels. Anyone who has watched the *Star Wars Episode II* bonus DVD will know how much work went into animating Yoda's robe and it has to be said that just as much intricacy seems to have gone into *TWW*'s characters.

But what of the actual game? Well, it's no surprise that familiar faces like Princess Zelda and the evil wizard Ganondorf make an appearance (what with the game being called *The Legend Of Zelda* and everything) but this time around, there's much more to do than just save Zelda's arse. As with every other *Zelda* title, there

is a theme to the game that makes itself apparent in the game's subtitle. Just as *Ocarina Of Time* revolved around a time-altering musical instrument, *The Wind Waker* concentrates on controlling the wind. This aspect is essential to the game, and the two major areas of gameplay innovation reflect this. The early sections of the game will seem like standard *Zelda* territory, but after playing for a few hours Link will have to find himself a small Dragon Boat. The boat is the only available method of transport between the numerous island hideouts that Link must visit. In typical Nintendo style, the Dragon Boat is alive and talks to Link, much like the animated FLUDD device from *Super*

DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q2 '03
(Japan: Out Now/
US: 24 March)
GENRE: Action RPG
PLAYERS: 1

■ Control the infamous elf Link in a third-person adventure with numerous RPG and puzzle-based elements. Should keep you busy...

WINDY BY NATURE

The Wand Of The Wind is the item around which the entire game revolves. It resembles a conductor's baton and Link has to use it in much the same way that a conductor would lead an orchestra. Instructions come up on the screen in the form of C-stick directions. Flicking the C-stick in the right directions will alter the direction of the wind. Link can choose the direction he wants to use, but each change has its own C-stick combination. A successful combination means Link can reach new areas using the Dragon Boat and Deku Leaves.

"BY LEARNING SET PATTERNS LINK CAN 'CONDUCT' THE WIND, THUS CHANGING ITS DIRECTION"



ND WAKER



■ Ah, a life on the ocean waves...
the nautical theme is strong in *TWW*.



■ Link is dwarfed by most of his new enemies.

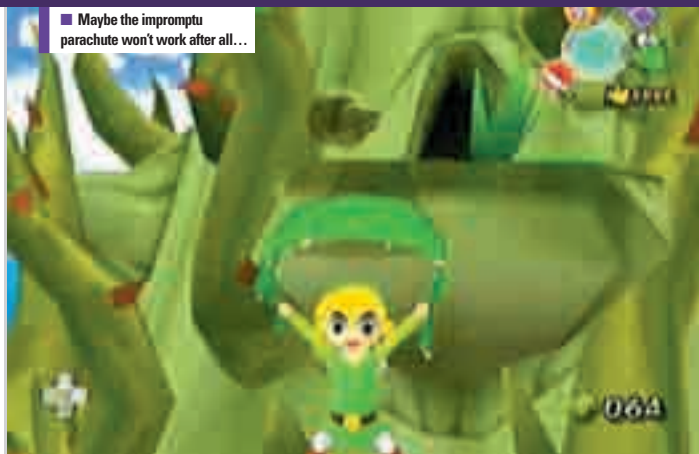


"WHEN YOU CAN TOUCH
THE ANIMATION IT'S
REALLY AMAZING...
AFTER IT WAS DONE I
TRIED IT AND I WAS
REALLY HAPPY"

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO, NINTENDO

■ Much of the design inspiration
has come from *A Link To The Past*.

LEGEND OF ZELDA (CONTINUED)



"YOU GET A SENSE OF ADVENTURE... I CAN GUARANTEE THAT"

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO, NINTENDO

▷ *Mario Sunshine*. Apart from giving advice on which parts of the seabed are likely to hold treasure, the boat will also fill you in on the existence of the Wand Of The Wind. By learning specific wand patterns Link can 'conduct' the wind, thus changing its direction. The Dragon Boat is powered by the wind and without it Link is going nowhere. By changing the direction of the wind, Link can visit new areas and further his exploration. The cynics amongst you could argue that this is a very cheeky way of limiting your exploration, and yes, essentially that's what it does.

The second use for the wind comes in the form of gliding. Later on in the game, Link will enter an area of the ocean filled with Deku Trees (they're a bit like giant beanstalks). The trees are hundreds of metres apart and the only way to progress is to grab hold of a Deku Leaf and make a leap for it from the treetops. Once airborne, general direction and speed can be controlled via the D-pad. If the wind is blowing towards you, common sense will tell you that you aren't going anywhere. Similarly, a crosswind will blow you way off target – the *Super Monkey Ball* fans out there will recognise this as a blatant rip-off of Monkey Target. Miyamoto-san has expressed his love of SEGA's classic in the past and here's the confirmation.

One aspect of *Ocarina Of Time* that has been adopted by practically every subsequent 3D adventure game is the lock-on system. This battle system has been brought back for *TWW*, albeit with more options and subtle changes. The B-

button has many more uses in the game than simply cancelling a decision. In a battle situation, your sword will give you cues for more powerful strikes (such as leaping clean over an enemy and smacking him on the noggin). Upon landing, Link can immediately turn and continue the attack, and fans will be pleased to hear that you can charge Link's spinning attack while you are jumping around.

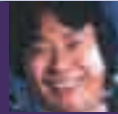
A well-placed spin attack will throw an enemy across the room. In a confined area enemies will bounce off walls and back into a spinning attack, making for some very pleasing juggle combos. With two or three enemies in a room the fun increases ten-fold as the overweight hogs get thrown into each other like a game of skittles – and all enemies will drop whatever they happen to be carrying, be it items, armour or weapons. In many cases, the use of an enemy's weapon is essential to progressing through a dungeon. Link's weedy wooden blade isn't going to be much use against a hefty door but a six-foot long steel blade might just do the trick.

If past *Zelda* games are anything to go by, these new additions will just be the tip of the iceberg. Despite having the game in the office right now, there seems to be little point in reviewing a title for which an in-depth understanding of the storyline and conversation is so important. Therefore, you can expect something much more substantial from us when the US version hits the streets in March. Can you wait that long? We certainly can't. Two whole months...

INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS

It's amazing what a bit of dedication (and having a kidnapped little sister) can make you do. Despite coming up against 200-foot-high, molten magma-breathing monsters, the yard-high elfling still manages to overcome the odds. This can be put down to the fact that he has a plentiful supply of gadgets to hand, such as grappling hooks, a boomerang, a sword, bombs and magical fairies who bring him back to life. Helpful that. Nintendo has made all these items extremely easy to use – after all, the difficulty of the game shouldn't lie in using the weaponry. Not all of Link's gadgets are used to do damage, though. Items such as the telescope can be used to discover secret caves and floating debris on the high seas, or to scope out possible landing points from the tops of Deku Trees.





DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ *The Wind Waker* is the next big thing from Shigeru Miyamoto, the legendary games designer responsible for *Donkey Kong*, *Super Mario* and the *Legend Of Zelda* series. He has also overseen pretty much every Nintendo first and second-party title, from *Mario Kart* to *1080°*, right through to *Metroid Prime*.

HISTORY

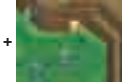
- METROID PRIME 2002 [GameCube]
- ANIMAL CROSSING 2002 [GameCube]
- SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE 2002 [GameCube]

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

CARTOONY ON THE OUTSIDE, OLD-SKOOL ON THE INSIDE



ANIME



ZELDA: LTP



LOTR



ZELDA: TWW

■ "Yeah, yeah, mine's bigger than yours..."

"ENEMIES WILL BOUNCE OFF WALLS AND BACK INTO A SPINNING ATTACK, MAKING FOR SOME VERY PLEASING JUGGLE COMBOS"

■ Link puts his cheeky-chappy face on - "You ain't seen me..."

■ Hyrule; a land where women grow on trees. Marvellous.

IGI 2: COVERT STRIKE

■ Draw distance and pop-up are two things you won't have to worry about. Armed guards, on the other hand...



IT'S OFFICIAL – STEALTH IS THE NEW 'BULLET TIME'

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: Europe
PUBLISHER: Codemasters
DEVELOPER: Innerloop Studios
RELEASE: February '03 (Japan/US: TBA)
GENRE: Shoot-'em-up
PLAYERS: 1-16

■ The PC isn't short of first-person shooters but *IGI 2* could turn a few heads.

"MILITARY ACCURACY, STEALTH-BASED GAMEPLAY AND LUSH VISUALS MAKE UP THE IGI PACKAGE"

Picture the scene – rolling hills, vast plains and huge towns, all of which can be freely explored and exploited over the course of a mission. While such idyllic thoughts may be some way off in terms of gaming, several shooters have hinted at such large-scale environments and the finest effort so far must be a little-known PC game called *Project IGI*. One of the title's main selling points was its epic settings – the sprawling landscapes were a remarkable feat of freedom. Luckily, *IGI 2* seems to use this feature even more than

its predecessor. Long-distance sniping over areas in excess of a mile is set to be commonplace, but there'll be more than enough 'up close and personal' moments to maintain a good balance.

It's clear that all-out realism is the goal with *IGI 2*; Innerloop has enlisted the services of SAS hero and author Chris Ryan. As military consultant on the project, he's ensuring that the firearms available to the player (over 30 real weapons will be featured) look and, more importantly, function like the real thing. The crux of the game still maintains the heavy emphasis on stealth – find yourself outnumbered and you'll soon find yourself dead.

The only real comparisons that can be drawn are with the many Tom Clancy games – with the exception of *Splinter Cell*, these tend to be very clinical and unforgiving. That said, *IGI 2* is more active and also much more forgiving while maintaining its integral realism. Difficult it may be, but it remains predominantly fair.

Being a PC game, how it looks and runs will always depend on your machine. Given that the requirements for the first game were pretty high, we envisage the finalised specs being really rather demanding. But then look what you get for your investment – *IGI 2* looks extremely impressive as well as showcasing countless unique features that should really stand out in the crowded market.

Multiplayer has been confirmed but not seen as yet (although it sounds similar to *Counter-Strike*). So long as the finished product lives up to what we've seen so far, *IGI 2* could be one of the sleeper hits of the year.



■ Get a clear view of your target before taking the shot – giving away your location is a foolish mistake to make.



■ The wisdom of using a knife to attack a helicopter is questionable.



■ Keeping out of sight drastically heightens your chances of survival – for a while anyway.





STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC



■ The sun spills into this Bantha paddock with such intensity that it softens the edges of the canopy.



■ When the game is released, everyone you talk to will respond with actual speech, rather than text.

A STAR WARS TITLE TO PLEASE THE MOST DIE-HARD JEDI GAMERS

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox/PC

ORIGIN: US

PUBLISHER:

Activision

DEVELOPER:

BioWare

RELEASE: March

(Xbox), Q2 '03 (PC)

(Japan/US: TBC)

GENRE: RPG

PLAYERS: 1

■ With BioWare's heritage and LucasArts's licence, is this the RPG of the year?

"KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC IS SHAPING UP TO BE THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE STAR WARS GAME EVER CREATED"



There are so many LucasArts videogames that simply don't live up to the standards set by the *Star Wars* movies.

Many utilise fairly competent graphics engines and John Williams's superb score, and are even fairly creative in terms of design and structure. But the finished product always seems to lack the polish you'd expect from such a prolific developer.

Thankfully, this trend looks set to change with the release of *Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic* on PC and Xbox, as it's being created by acclaimed PC RPG

developer BioWare, rather than in-house at LucasArts. BioWare is particularly well-known for its in-depth approach to the RPG genre; every one of its titles has featured a hefty selection of character stats and evolution, as well as many hours of gameplay. And that's exactly how the company is developing *KOTOR* – we're promised up to 60 hours of gameplay, crammed full of all the stat-tweaking and character-building any *Star Wars*, or indeed RPG, fan could ever wish for.

The adventure is set 4,000 years before the first movie, in a time when both Jedi and Sith number in the thousands. As a Jedi Knight, you and a group of three other warriors (be they human, Wookie, droid or something else from the *Star Wars* universe) must travel to various locations, destroying all evil. The clever part is that this can be played either as a standard slash-'em-up, a team strategy game or a full turn-based battle affair in which you decide every attack that each individual team member makes. At the moment, this area of the game is still being adjusted, though BioWare is confident that the finished results will be well worth the wait.

As for the rest of the game, things are already looking mighty impressive. The graphics engine is capable of handling a wide variation of effects from 3D grass to shadow-casting and bump-mapping, and the cut-scenes (created by BioWare) are incredibly authentic. Add to that a soundtrack that blends musical phrases from John Williams's classic score with brand new tunes and it's clear that *KOTOR* is shaping up to be the most comprehensive *Star Wars* game ever. And after several poor showings for the *Star Wars* licence (see page 127 for proof), devoted Jedi gamers need something decent.



■ Have it! A tasty bit of dual lightsaber action should take care of intergalactic nasties.



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE



PRAY SILENCE FOR THE FATHER OF MODERN STEALTH GAMES, SOLID SNAKE. OH, AND THAT RAIDEN GUY AGAIN...

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox/PS2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Konami
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: March (US: Out Now)
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ Hundreds of VR missions and numerous extra game modes herald Snake and Raiden's multiformat return. Will Sam Fisher be running to the hills?



With many proclaiming Sam Fisher the new Solid Snake, it's only fair that the rugged *MGS* sneaker gets another chance to shine. After the much-hyped launch of *Metal Gear Solid 2*, players were divided into two camps; for every person absorbed by the stealth action and cinematic feel, another would dismiss the game outright. Yet despite the controversy, there was something about the second coming of Snake that kept us playing. And for those who weren't that impressed first time around, this 'Director's Cut' package may well add enough to warrant a second look. Every element is being enhanced to bring more action, more insight into the storyline and generally more *Gear* for your money. A multi-format release will bring the series to a wider audience than ever before, but will the world be seeing Raiden, Snake and co in their best light?

Well, what's not to like about *Metal Gear*? For those who thought there wasn't enough action, *Substance* adds a more than generous helping of extra gameplay via several new play modes – most obviously the VR Missions. There are over 350 of these skill tests that span multiple characters and tasks, and if that wasn't enough to keep you going, each of these is ranked (the code you receive at the end of a chart-topping run can be used to place you in a worldwide ranking system through Konami's Web site). There are two types of mission: VR Missions – not a new idea but well-executed nonetheless – and Alternative Missions, similar situations but in real-world environments. You may have

heard about a skateboarding mini-game, but you won't find it here. Screenshots and details were taken from the forthcoming *Evolution Skateboarding*, where some characters and stages are of *Metal Gear* origin – no such mode exists in *Substance*, more's the pity.

There's also the small matter of *Sneaking Tales*; this five-part story should silence Raiden's critics as Snake fans can now see just what Snake was up to on the Big Shell. The story runs from Snake and Raiden's first meeting to brand new story elements created solely for this package. Thanks to the Alternative Missions, you'll also be able to cross over missions – for the first time you can be Snake in the Plant and take Raiden to the Tanker. The original rumour was that the entire game would be playable with either character but this doesn't appear to be the case; quite how the story and cut-scenes would ever have covered this is a mystery. We're glad they've listened to the fans and given Snake a more active role, but on the other hand it's hard to see anything wrong with Raiden's character. The initial shock of not playing as Snake throughout the game just left a lot of people with an instant dislike for his replacement.

From an aesthetic point of view, the main game in the PS2 version has changed little since the title was first released. That said, few titles have matched the overall quality and attention to detail of Konami's stealth opus so it still comes across as quite visually striking. Moving it over to Microsoft's powerhouse is another story – it has sharper textures, quicker loading and

full Dolby Digital support among the improvements. Bear in mind, though, that the game was originally designed for the PS2 controller – that's not to say that the larger pad doesn't work, but the 'four shoulder button' layout is rather heavily employed. But for now it's back to VR Training – we'll have all those missions done in no time. Honest...



THE FUTURE IS NOW

Could people have been more wrong about Virtual Reality? Far from being 'the future of entertainment', VR is now just a fading memory. It was a nice idea though, and we're obviously not the only ones who think so – the original *Metal Gear Solid* was treated to the *VR Missions* expansion shortly after its release and now *Substance* is keeping the VR dream alive. Once again, there are literally hundreds of these training missions on offer to put all your sneaky skills to the test. And completing them all has got to earn you something special, right?



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

XBOX/MULTIFORMAT



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ The brains behind the entire *Metal Gear Solid* series, Hideo Kojima, was born in Setagaya, Tokyo, in 1963. After joining Konami as a game designer, he swiftly moved up the ranks and released the original *Metal Gear* on the MSX in 1987. Despite an MSX sequel in 1990, it wasn't until 1998 that Solid Snake made his PSone debut.

HISTORY

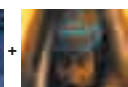
- METAL GEAR SOLID 2 2001 [PS2]
- METAL GEAR SOLID 1998 [PSone]
- POLICENAUTS 1996 [Saturn]

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

WHAT MAKE MGS2 SO SUBSTANTIAL



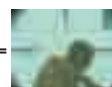
MGS



TRON



MORE SNAKE



MGS2: SUBSTANCE



■ Blood everywhere and two guards round the corner – Raiden never had it so good.

“THE INITIAL SHOCK OF NOT PLAYING AS SNAKE THROUGHOUT THE GAME JUST LEFT A LOT OF PEOPLE WITH AN INSTANT DISLIKE FOR HIS REPLACEMENT”

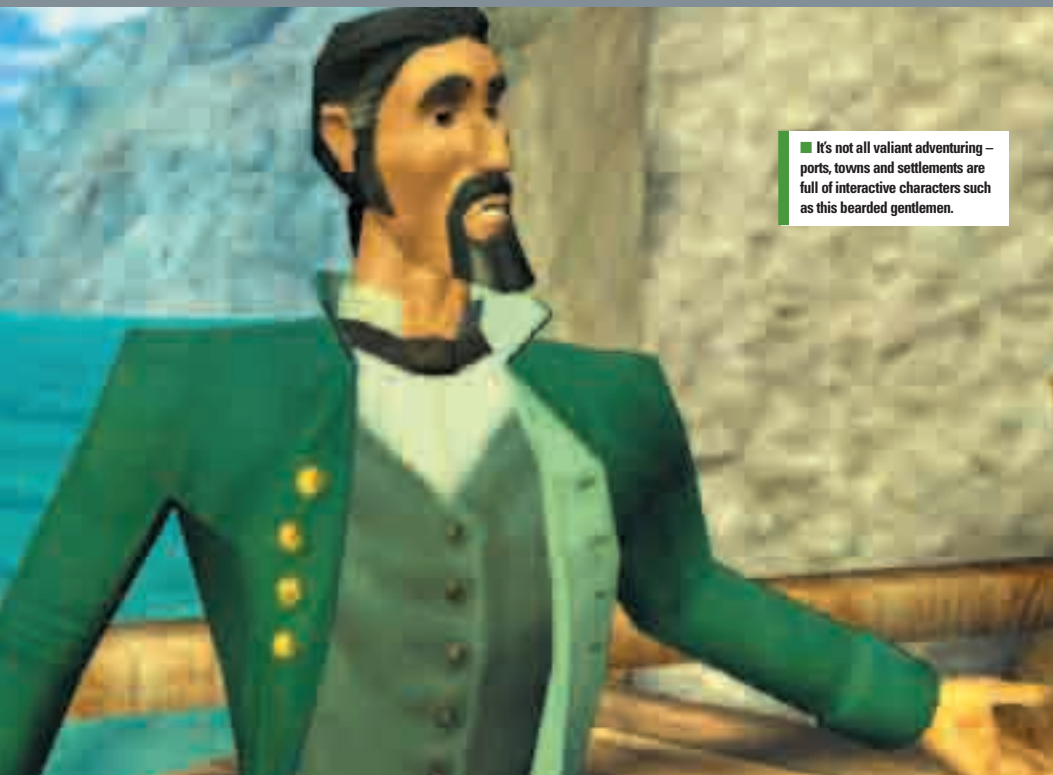


■ We know Snake was on the Big Shell but what was he up to the whole time? Five all-new *Sneak Tales* reveal all.



■ He'll feel that one if he ever wakes up... Snake takes out his aggression on a downed foe.

GALLEON: ISLANDS OF MYSTERY



■ It's not all valiant adventuring – ports, towns and settlements are full of interactive characters such as this bearded gentlemen.

TOMB RAIDER WITH PIRATES? WE'LL DOWN SOME GROG TO THAT...

DETAILS

FORMAT:
Xbox/GameCube
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER:
Interplay
DEVELOPER:
Confounding Factor
RELEASE: 28 March
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ Lara Croft's creator turns his attention to the seven seas in this delayed adventure.

"WE JUST HOPE THAT THE EXTRA DEVELOPMENT TIME IS BEING PUT TO GOOD USE"

■ Delays and videogames go hand in hand these days. Gone is the time when developers could knock out five to ten titles a year – it's now not uncommon for games to be several years in the making. Currently due for release over three years after it was first announced, *Galleon* still has the makings of a great game. Learning from the mistakes of the *Tomb Raider* series, *Galleon* has always promised to go places that Lara's adventures have never quite managed. Hopefully this extra time in production will

have helped Confounding Factor realise its goal with what is an increasingly ambitious title. We're not expecting a groundbreaking game but if it even approaches its own hype, it'll be nothing short of superb.

Galleon follows the exploits of Captain Rhama Sabrier and his crew across six massive areas of a fictional world. Seeing as how Toby Gard was responsible for Ms Croft's 'assets', it comes as a surprise that the central character here is male. Rhama's speed, agility and dashing good looks combine to form the perfect seafaring hero, but he obviously needs the assistance of a perfect ship's crew. This is where Gard has really gone to town – most of the crew members recruited over the course of the quest fall into the 'female', 'buxom' and 'attractive' categories. Each has unique abilities that will undoubtedly be essential in the completion of your mission to (you guessed it) retrieve a powerful ancient artefact before it falls into the wrong hands.

The *Tomb Raider* links don't stop with Toby Gard, either. Gameplay-wise, expect jumping and puzzle solving to be interspersed with swashbuckling action and exploring sections. One major difference from Lara's tales is the graphical style; gone is the wannabe realism in favour of a neat stylised look. While we agree that this may not look particularly amazing from stills, the animation sets off the style beautifully. Much as we're looking forward to *Galleon*, we are a little worried by the continued delays the game suffers. As long as the hold-ups prove not to be in vain, we look forward to scouring the globe for buried treasure in March. Or June. Or sometime next year...



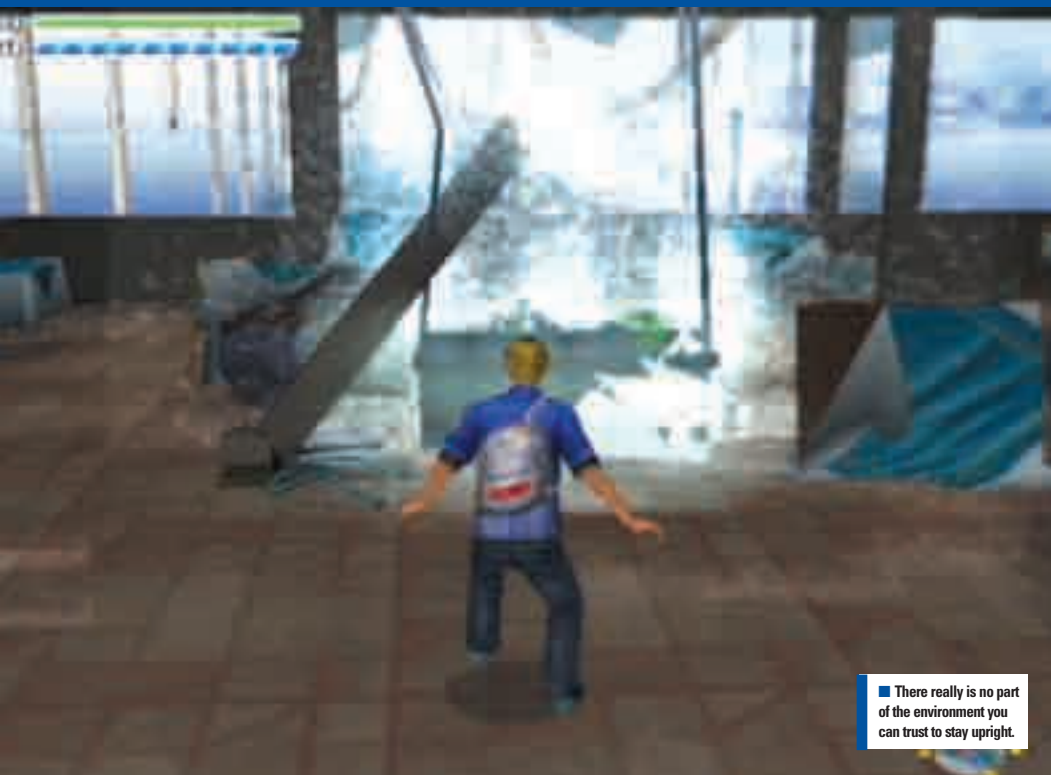
■ Rhama inadvertently stumbles into a great pantomime moment. No, really – it is behind you...



■ Let's get this straight – you're attacking a giant crustacean with your bare hands. Hmm...



SOS: THE FINAL ESCAPE



■ There really is no part of the environment you can trust to stay upright.

NATURE CAN BE SCARIER THAN ANYTHING COOKED UP IN A LAB...

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Bigben Interactive
DEVELOPER: Irem
RELEASE: February '03 (Japan/US: Out Now)
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ Following a huge earthquake, escape to safety by traversing the deadly aftermath.

"THIS LOOKS LIKE IT WILL BE A REFRESHINGLY INVENTIVE SLANT ON THE SURVIVAL HORROR GENRE"

■ You'd think that if you took the enemies out of a survival horror game, you'd be left with nothing to do. Can you imagine *Resident Evil* sans zombies? *Eternal Darkness* without, er, thingies? No, us neither. But this is exactly the approach being taken by Irem with *SOS: The Final Escape*. This story doesn't feature any imaginary beasts, just a very real terror – earthquakes. Starting in Capital City, an area recently devastated by a huge quake, your task is to make your way from the disaster zone and reach relative safety. Having been

missed by the last rescue chopper, you're left with no choice but to go it alone on foot, and so the adventure begins.

The last parting helicopter is good enough to leave behind a rucksack of supplies – you'll need to keep an eye on your thirst level so as not to get dehydrated during your struggle for survival. You'll also receive a handy compass and the backpack can be used to store the many items found over the course of your escape. These vary from maps and diaries to umbrellas and shovels, all of which you'll need if you are to make it to safety. Of course, with the island having been heavily populated you won't be alone in your exploits. There are numerous other people with the same goal as you, some of whom will join you, while others will lend a hand briefly rather than actually coming with you.

From what we've seen, *SOS* offers something different to the hordes of 'scary monster' titles; it's remarkable that such a feeling of dread has been created when the only enemies are time and the elements. Visually and aurally, the game certainly isn't enormously taxing for Sony's machine, but this is no bad thing – the sense of scale and impending doom created by the surroundings (not to mention the attention to detail, right down to your clothes becoming tattered as you scramble through rubble) is so great, you won't even notice that everything is slightly rough around the edges. Sure, there's nothing to run away from and nobody to shoot at, but we still feel that *SOS* could prove to be an unexpected success when it escapes to safety later in the year.



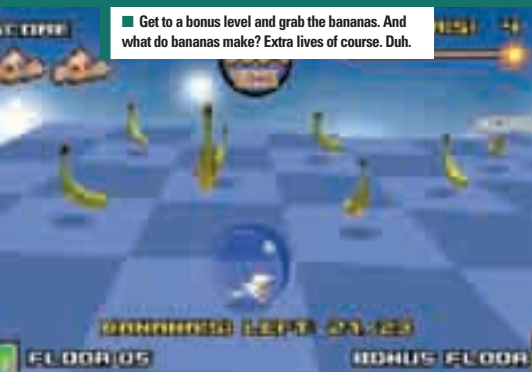
■ Occasionally the ground will fall right out from under you, leaving you clinging on for dear life.



■ Drastic times call for drastic measures – without a little rope and a lot of bravery, there's no way to save Karen.



SUPER MONKEY BALL JR



■ Get to a bonus level and grab the bananas. And what do bananas make? Extra lives of course. Duh.



■ Another one bites the dust – or more specifically, plunges headlong into the bottomless abyss below.

MONKEYS, BALLS AND A GAME BOY ADVANCE – WHAT MORE COULD YOU POSSIBLY WANT?

DETAILS

FORMAT: GBA
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: SEGA
RELEASE: Q1 '03
GENRE: Puzzle
PLAYERS: 1-4

■ The premise is the same – get the monkey in a ball through each goal safely. But now the whole thing's been squeezed onto the GBA. Lovely.

“MONKEY BALL ON THE GAMECUBE KEPT US GOING FOR AGES – PUTTING IT ON THE GBA IS TANTAMOUNT TO SOCIAL SUICIDE”

■ Whatever it is that the folks at SEGA are smoking, we'd like some please – after all, it must have taken a fair amount of 'funny cigarettes' to come up with the concept for *Super Monkey Ball*. Fair enough, it's an idea that had been done before (*Marble Madness* had been and gone nearly two decades previously) but throwing monkeys into the mix as well? Pure genius. The disadvantage of the whole thing is that the GameCube isn't exactly the most portable of games consoles – even with the Wavebird, we can't play the game as much as we'd like without sitting in front of the TV all day. That was, however, before

SEGA had the idea of bringing the game to the GBA – and in a form that'll impress even the most cynical of gamers.

Of course, if the game looks remarkably similar to the original GameCube version then why will people be impressed? Well, probably because *Super Monkey Ball Jr* does look so much like its GameCube counterpart. Slightly cut-down visuals aside (and you can't knock the GBA for that – it's a 32-bit handheld, for Christ's sake), it's nigh-on identical. This, not surprisingly, is a good thing because the concept was pretty much perfect as it was. While the thought of balancing a monkey in a ball along a series of platforms might not sound like much, it's frustratingly addictive – even when brought over in slimmed-down form to the GBA.

What's more, there's a selection of mini-games on offer to unlock including stalwarts such as *Monkey Fight*, *Monkey Bowling* and *Monkey Golf* – again, all in practically identical forms to the GameCube versions. Unfortunately, one thing that *Super Monkey Ball Jr* doesn't take advantage of is the innovative tilt cartridge used by *Kirby Tilt N' Tumble* on the Game Boy Color. As the mercury-equipped cart recognises which direction you tip the handheld in, you'd have thought that this game would have been perfect for it. However, as it's difficult enough to see the GBA screen from one angle (let alone many), we can appreciate why SEGA isn't taking advantage of it.

The only downside to all this is that *Super Monkey Ball Jr* still doesn't have a confirmed release date in the UK, so monkey-fans will have to hold their collective horses. In the meantime though, we can at least thank the lord for small miracles... and even smaller monkeys.



■ Yes, it's all very easy when the goal is right in front of you. Just wait until you have to attempt those fiendish Expert levels...



STARKY AND HUTCH



"SPEEDING THROUGH THE STREETS WITH THE WIND RACING THROUGH YOUR AFRO-STYLED HAIR HAS NEVER BEEN SO ENTERTAINING"

And Hutch gives you the chance to enjoy the game with a friend, although it's not the typical split-screen action you might expect. Instead, you each get to be one half of the team – one person drives the car while the other leans out of the window and fires hot lead at the bad guys. Naturally, two pads are the norm for this but if you're lucky enough to own a steering wheel you can use that to drive. Even better though, owners of the PlayStation2 version will be able to use a combination of a steering wheel and a lightgun to play as a team; the lack of a lightgun for the Xbox and GameCube though, means that this feature hasn't been confirmed for anything other than the PS2 game.

From the early code we've played so far, the game shows promise. Obviously, it's a little rough around the edges but there's nothing that can't be polished up in the final build. As long as the game manages to capture the atmosphere of the show and offer a decent gameplay experience at the same time (something both *The Dukes Of Hazzard* and *Knight Rider* failed to do), Empire should be onto a winner.



DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2/Xbox/GC/GBA/PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Empire Interactive
DEVELOPER: Mind's Eye
RELEASE: March '03 (PS2/PC), June '03 (Xbox), September '03 (GC/GBA)
GENRE: Driving
PLAYERS: 1-2

Grab your flares and get ready for a seventies spin round the block as you chase bad guys, look cool and snag ratings.

RIDE WITH THE COPS WHO ARE TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL

The late seventies/early eighties TV revival thing seems to be very in at the moment. Not only have we seen recent videogame versions of shows like *The Dukes Of Hazzard* and *Knight Rider*, but now it's the turn of those flares-wearing, jive-talking cops Starky and Hutch. Based on the original TV show and featuring the voice of Huggy Bear himself, the action is exactly what you'd imagine – there's a criminal on the loose and, obviously, it's your job to catch him.

It might look like a basic driving game from these screens, but the title actually plays like a combination of other games –

think the open-plan map style of something like *Driver* or *GTA3* (complete with lots of narrow alleyways to dodge down) mixed with the chasing, crashing and shooting action that we haven't seen since the days of *Chase HQ* in the arcades. Although catching the criminal is paramount, you also have to think about your ratings – after all, a TV show isn't successful without viewers. If you want to up your ratings you'll have to be exciting by smashing through crates, hitting ramps and skidding round every corner – just like in the show.

Because it features a crime-fighting duo, it's no surprise to learn that *Starcky*

Grab the power-ups to upgrade your weapon, enhance your driving or go flying with a turbo boost.



There's lots to shoot at and you get on-screen comments on your accuracy.



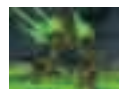
STEEL BATTALION



■ The on-screen display mirrors the elaborate control system.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

PUSHING THE BUTTONS OF STEEL BATTALION



MECHWARRIOR



PC



TRAINING COCKPIT



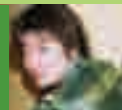
STEEL BATTALION

"I KEPT STEEL BATTALION A SECRET FROM OUR BOARD MEMBERS UNTIL THE DEVELOPMENT HAD REACHED A POINT WHERE THEY COULDN'T SAY NO"

ATSUSHI INABA, CAPCOM



■ You're aiming in the right place but can you find the proper button to shoot it?



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Although he's already risen to the ranks of Producer at Capcom's Production Studio 4, Atsushi Inaba is a relative newcomer to the games industry – his only other work for Capcom is *Resident Evil Code: Veronica*. With a sequel to *Steel Battalion* already underway though, there's no doubt that Inaba-san will be a famous face soon.

HISTORY

- RE CODE: VERONICA X 2001 [PS2]
- RE CODE: VERONICA 1999 [Dreamcast]

IT BRINGS A WHOLE NEW MEANING TO THE TERM 'HEAVY METAL'

Big robots rule – that's a fact, so don't go denying it. From the Gundam craze in Japan to the likes of Transformers over here, there's something cool about mechanical behemoths stomping all over the place... particularly if they're decked out with enough weapons to flatten a small country. While watching them do their stuff is one thing though, the thought of getting to drive your own mech is something entirely different – mainly because most mech games don't even come close to the experience you'd get if such robots existed. At least, they didn't until *Steel Battalion* came along...

Of course, being the well-informed gamers that you all are, you'll already know what *Steel Battalion* is all about – big robot suits, even bigger artillery and a whole lot of explosions, albeit from a slightly hardened and gritty Neo-Tokyo viewpoint rather than the typically Manga-esque style you might expect. Instead of being a basic blast-'em-up with robots in it though (like *MechAssault*, *Phantom Crash* and *Robotron*), it goes further into the simulation side than most of the games we've seen before. But before you run away because we used the 's' word, you should know that we're not talking about the kind of 'all realism, no fun' games you might normally associate with a sim.

The main reason *Steel Battalion* falls between shoot-'em-up and simulation is

because of the massive custom-made controller used to 'drive' the Vertical Tanks (or VTs) – it's so big it comes in three boxes. There's no joypad or mouse and keyboard set-up here; instead, all control is via the twin joysticks (one for steering, one for aiming), pedals (accelerate, brake and 'boost' for dodging missiles) and around 40 buttons and switches, which do everything from change weapons and activate night-vision to wash the windscreen of your VT.

What's more, there's no external, chase or close-range views – you're the pilot of the VT, so that puts you firmly in the cockpit at all times... heck, you even have to eject from the VT if you take too much damage, unless you fancy getting killed and losing your whole game (save data included). It's this in-depth interface and level of atmosphere that makes the game more of a simulation than most mech games.

Obviously, developing such an ambitious game has cost Capcom a pretty penny – given the lack of success that the Xbox has seen in Japan, it's a surprising move – and the fact that the package looks set to retail at around £120 in the UK could limit its popularity, regardless of how good the game is. But as the game's producer, Atsushi Inaba, says, the idea was to create a game like no other rather than rake in the cash. "The target audience for *Steel Battalion* was purely serious gamers – not just in Japan, but throughout the world

and gamers who are eager to experience something new and different," he insists.

We have to admit that having played *Steel Battalion* for a good few hours, it's totally unique; short of actually driving a real tank, we've never seen anything like it. The bottom line is that when Capcom took it all away, we wanted it back – the hands-on experience is something very special indeed. We doubt it'll fly off the shelves when it arrives (due to the hefty price tag) but nevertheless, this is just the kind of game we bought our Xbox consoles for in the first place.



DETAILS

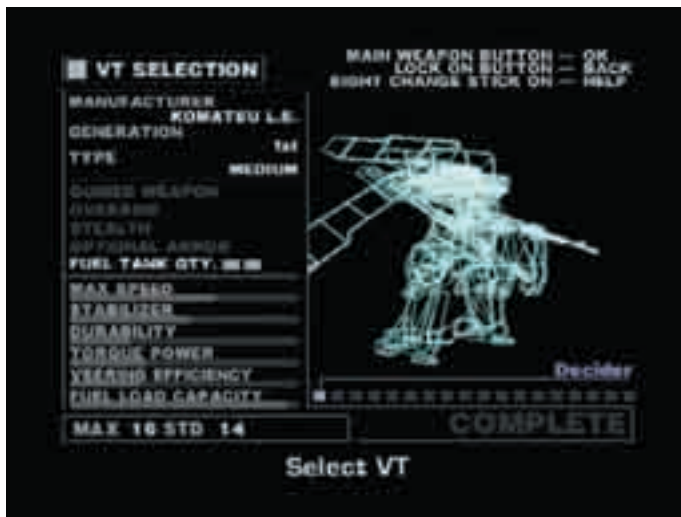
FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: March '03 (Japan/US: Out Now)
GENRE: Action/Simulation
PLAYERS: 1

■ Drive your own Vertical Tank through over 25 levels of mech-blasting and button-pushing.

"MORE AN EXPERIENCE THAN A GAME, STEEL BATTALION REQUIRES A LEVEL OF SKILL NOT SEEN IN A VIDEOGAME IN AGES"

CONTROL YOURSELF

Regardless of its size, it's obvious that the controller for *Steel Battalion* is more than just another meaningless peripheral to drain you of your cash. Unlike other games that use unique peripherals but can be played without them – such as *Dance Dance Revolution*, *Samba De Amigo* and every lightgun game under the sun – *Steel Battalion* comes with the controller as standard because you can't play the game without it. This in itself is not a bad thing, as the massive twin joystick and pedals combination offers a style of gameplay unseen before in a mech game. However, it may be a little excessive with such a high price tag. Good thing there's a sequel already on the way...



■ Bingo! But if they shoot you you'll need to eject before your VT explodes.

LAMBORGHINI

WE CAN'T AFFORD ONE, YOU CAN'T AFFORD ONE BUT, HEY, LET'S ALL RACE THEM ANYWAY...

Remember how in loads of old beat-'em-ups, CPU characters would be absolutely terrible at first before becoming crazily good just when it mattered? We can only assume this is what has happened to *Rage* of late. Sure, it's never been truly awful, but titles like *David Beckham Soccer* weren't going to establish it as a world-class developer, and *Denki Blocks* hinted at greatness but was commercially unsuccessful. But late last year, *Rage* found form with the excellent *Rocky*. Unwilling to let this momentum slip, its latest title should be even more impressive than 2002's boxing extravaganza. An enormous license like *Lamborghini* is obviously a huge bonus, but we've seen enough poor games come from huge licences to leave us somewhat wary.

After just a few minutes of play, however, our fears were proved unfounded – *Lamborghini* looks (and, more importantly, plays) every bit as good as it should. From the shimmering cars to the track effects, even at this early stage there's little we can fault in terms of visuals. Given the extra development time, the versions that follow should also push the relevant hardware to a similar extent. In fact, we really can't wait to try the PS2 and GameCube versions – it's about time the PS2 had a potential *Gran Turismo*-beater and the GameCube is still lacking a truly great racer. It's not just a great-looking

game, though. It's rare to find a realistic racer with both decent handling and a real sense of speed but *Rage* looks to be adding the finishing touches to do just that.

There are numerous modes of play, many of which will be familiar to fans of the Dreamcast's seminal *Metropolis Street Racer* and its Xbox sequel. It would be all too easy to point the finger and scream about stolen elements but the truth is that there's only so much you can do with driving cars around circuits. As such, modes like Overtake Challenge, Perfect Lap and Time Attack work perfectly well in their own right without so much as a whiff of Kudos in the air. Many of these modes are part of the game's huge Championship mode – each of the 25 real cars has several different challenges to complete to earn extra cash and trophies for your expansive garage. You'll be surprised how quickly this will fill up with cars, trophies, cups and awards once you perfect the first couple of tracks.

Visiting real locations such as Las Vegas and the Black Forest, *Lamborghini* will really put your racing skills to the test around a variety of courses in each area. Of course, it wouldn't be a racing game without some kind of 'mirror mode' so all the courses become playable in either direction as your career progresses.

From what we've seen, it's hard to fault *Lamborghini*. Originality is the only area we could highlight, but even so, it's often a

case of producing either a realistic racer or an original one – the two seldom work together. Here though, there are some nice fresh touches being implemented alongside a lot of established elements. Hopefully, *Lamborghini* could 'do a *Halo*' and bring together the best bits of a tried and tested genre in one sublime package. It'll no doubt come under fire from *Turismoholics* who'll slam the amount and variety of cars on offer, but what's there is more than enough to keep us going for a while. And besides, when *Lamborghini* itself only exports 400 vehicles a year, how many different cars can you expect?

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox/PS2/
GameCube
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Rage
DEVELOPER:
In-House
RELEASE: TBC
GENRE: Racing
PLAYERS: 1-4 (1-TBC
via Xbox Live)

■ A stunning officially licensed racer. Already looking good and playing well, we'll be keeping an eye on this one...



SHOW ME THE MONEY

Money, cash, dosh... call it what you will, but cold hard currency is at the heart of the game's Championship mode. Starting out woefully out of pocket (in terms of what you'll need, at least), you'll need to win races and complete challenges in order to increase your funds. You'll have to shell out for repairs and resprays if your beautiful vehicle should get damaged, and fixing these bad boys doesn't come cheap. In addition to your legitimate earnings, you can also issue challenges to (and receive them from) your competitors. Most of these will be high stakes cash races but occasionally your challenger will be so confident as to put his or her car on the line in a Pink Slip race. Either way, with so much at stake you'll really want to consider course, conditions and competition before you agree to such a risky challenge.

■ Take your hard-earned wealth to the extravagant showroom and splash out on a new set of wheels.



Rage

DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Based in Liverpool, Rage has developed and published countless titles across various formats since its foundation in 1992. It has produced several games based on strong licences – with names like *David Beckham Soccer* and *Rocky* already under its belt, *Lamborghini* should fit nicely into the Rage portfolio.

HISTORY

- **ROCKY 2002** [Multiformat]
- **WILD WILD RACING 2000** [PlayStation2]
- **DEAD BALL ZONE 1998** [PSone]

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

LAMBORGHINI'S EXPENSIVE COMPONENTS



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING



ITALIAN SPORTS CARS



THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS



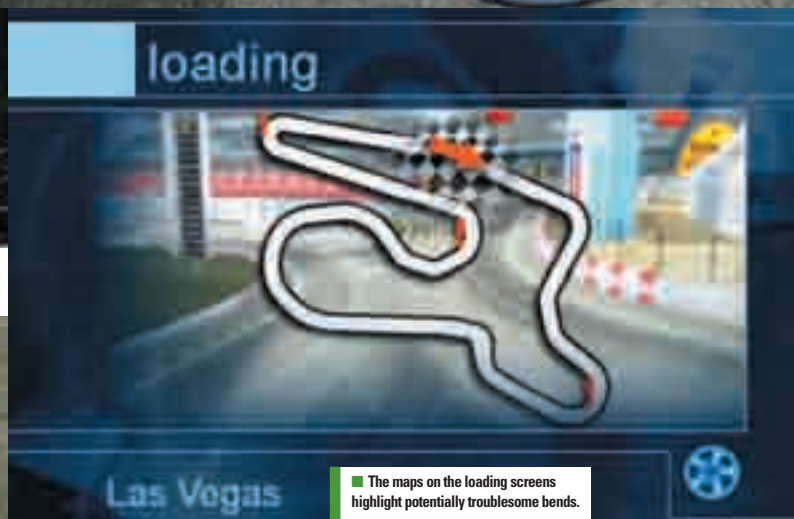
LAMBORGHINI

"AS WELL AS SEVERAL SINGLE AND MULTIPLAYER GAMING MODES, LAMBORGHINI WILL ALSO BE RAGE'S FIRST BROADBAND-CAPABLE RACING GAME"

■ Look no further for evidence of this game's beauty. Even at this early stage, lighting and reflection make for some very pretty scenes.



■ We know this is usually the case, but *Lamborghini's* in-car view gives a tremendous sense of speed.



■ The maps on the loading screens highlight potentially troublesome bends.

TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

AFTER MORE THAN FIVE YEARS IN THE PUBLIC EYE, LARA GETS A FACELIFT

P“A new Lara Croft for a new generation” – that’s how Eidos is flagging the latest *Tomb Raider* game. And judging by the enormous list of new features, gameplay additions and graphical updates, it would seem that this is indeed a new Lara Croft. Of course, the big question is whether fans of the original games really want something new. For us, the series seemed to lose a little of its potency after the first game and we really feel that the designers need to analyse the original game and identify the specific elements that made *Tomb Raider* great in the first place.

The experience of roughing it out in the elements seemed somewhat watered-down once Lara’s adventures started leading her through city streets and over rooftops, instead of through twisted tunnels and forgotten tombs. On top of that, much of the elegance that had been so integral to the first game seemed to vanish once the cave-dwelling bears and wolves were replaced by terrorists with guns. Sadly, it seems that the decidedly sterile environments from the later games are just what the creators of *Angel Of Darkness* have used here. Just like *Metal Gear*’s Solid Snake, Lara can use her fists, peer around corners and even grab enemies around the neck, but even at this late stage in development, it isn’t clear how integral these features will be in the final product.



■ Framed for murder, Lara has to mix with some seedy underworld sorts. And then kill them.

One thing is certain though – this is currently looking much more *Metal Gear* than *Tomb Raider*.

Another major change evident in the preview code is the camera which, as in *Resident Evil*, now stays fixed at certain points, presumably to make things a little more dramatic. The digital control issues made famous by the original games have also been addressed but, thanks to the new camera system, movement feels almost as awkward as it always did.

The fact that Eidos and Core are being so secretive about *Angel Of Darkness* so close to its release is worrying. The *Tomb Raider* franchise is huge all around the world and,

with the future of the series relying on the quality of this title, Core has got an enormous task on its hands. Following initially underwhelming responses to an early version last year, the game was delayed for three months to give the designers a little extra time to make the necessary adjustments, indicating that the criticisms were taken on board. Will this be long enough to improve the game? Find out next month.

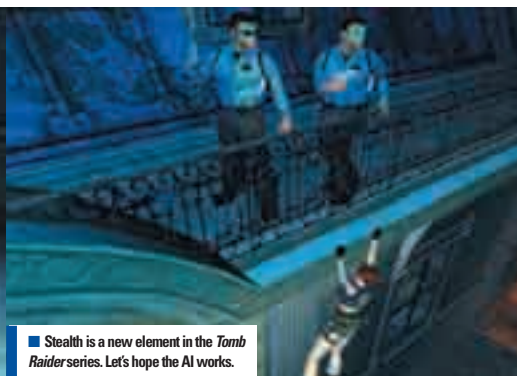


DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Eidos
DEVELOPER: Core
RELEASE: Feb '03
(Japan: TBA/US: Feb '03)
GENRE: Platform
PLAYERS: 1

■ Lara’s back with stealth, RPG and combat elements.

“THIS IS CURRENTLY LOOKING MUCH MORE METAL GEAR THAN TOMB RAIDER”



■ Stealth is a new element in the *Tomb Raider* series. Let’s hope the AI works.



■ The ability to peer round corners looks very nice, but we’re not sure this is what the *Tomb Raider* series should be about.



SHOWCASE

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR THE COMING MONTHS? WE'RE GLAD YOU ASKED...

DEF JAM VENDETTA

MOMMA SAID KNOCK YOUR OPPONENT OUT

Format: PS2/GameCube
Origin: US
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Sports BIG
Release: Q1 '03
Genre: Sports
Players: 1-4



When it comes to wrestling games they've been a bit hit and miss in the past, but the ones we remember most fondly are those developed for the N64 by a Japanese firm called Aki – mostly because they were damn good fun to play. Now Aki has teamed up with the folks at EA Sports BIG to create *Def Jam Vendetta*, a hip-hop style underground fighting game with wrestling elements, featuring the stars of the Def Jam record label. Promising to have all of the OTT style last seen in *NBA Street*, this looks like it'll be a blast of a game... even if you are one of those people who thinks wrestling's crap. Are you going to argue with these guys?

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE

ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH, DEAR FRIENDS

Format: PC/Xbox
Origin: US
Publisher: Phantagram
Developer: In-House
Release: May '03
Genre: RTS
Players: 1

Remember the start of *Gladiator* when Maximus and his Roman troops beat the living daylights out of all those hairy brutes? Impressive, wasn't it? Well, you might be interested to hear that there's now a game on the way that allows you to re-enact countless battles just like it – all in real time and with up to 450 characters scrapping on screen at any one time. *Kingdom Under Fire* casts you as a fearless leader with literally hundreds of troops at your command and the opportunity to slaughter evil hordes left, right and centre. Nice. Whether it'll live up to our expectations remains to be seen, but hopefully we'll have a full preview next month.



CAPCOM VS SNK 2: EO LIVE

FANCY A BIT OF LONG-DISTANCE SCRAPPING?

Format: Xbox
Origin: US
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-House
Release: 7 March '03
Genre: Beat-'em-up
Players: 1-2



As we reported last issue, Capcom has finally managed to achieve the impossible (at least in Europe) – an online beat-'em-up. Okay, so maybe the fact that it's a beat-'em-up we've seen several times over already (on the Dreamcast, PS2 and GameCube) might make the whole thing a tad anti-climactic but nevertheless, we're more than a little excited about the thought of kicking people's arses over long-distance. *Capcom VS SNK 2: EO Live* is easily the best *StreetFighter*-style game around at the moment (in our eyes, at least), so there's no doubt that adding online options will only enhance the playing experience even more. We'll have a full review for you next issue.

WORLD RACING

AROUND THE WORLD IN LOADS OF CARS

Format: Xbox
Origin: Germany
Publisher: TDK Mediactive
Developer: In-House
Release: February '03
Genre: Racing
Players: 1-2

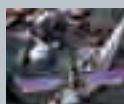
While racing games are a dime a dozen at the moment, there are very few that bridge the gap between arcade and simulation with any real success. *World Racing* is the latest game to try where others have failed and, from what we've seen so far, it seems to do quite well. You can change how realistic or arcade-styled the game is via a slider, while the tracks are interesting enough to keep up the pace whichever setting you're using. Featuring more Mercedes cars than the whole of Jersey, this Xbox exclusive title could be the *Gran Turismo* that Microsoft needs to beat Sony at its own game. We'll give you a verdict in next month's in-depth review.





CANNED – RALLY FUSION (GAMECUBE)

■ Those of you hoping to experience the joys of Activision's new racing game on the GameCube may be disappointed to hear it's been cancelled. And without any reason being given, no less. Bah.



DELAYED – PANZER DRAGOON ORTA (XBOX)

■ It should have been out now, but SEGA's much-awaited dragony shoot-'em-up has been delayed until late March. Looks like we'll have to keep playing it on our Saturdays for just a little longer...

ENTER THE MATRIX

BLUE PILL, RED PILL... IT'S ALL THE SAME TO US

Format: PS2/Xbox/GameCube/PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Shiny Entertainment
Release: May '03
Genre: Action/Adventure
Players: 1



There might not be a spoon, but there is a game based on the upcoming *Matrix* movie sequels – and it's only a few months away. Running alongside the storyline of the trilogy rather than following it, *Enter The Matrix* offers a selection of *Matrix* characters to play as (including good old Morpheus, but not Neo) and has you running up walls and blasting Agents all over the shop – just as you'd expect. Featuring voice acting from the film's actors, some top-notch motion capture and more bullet-time effects than you'll be able to deal with, it looks quite nice. Until we actually get a chance to play it though, we won't hold our breath for anything truly groundbreaking.

UNREAL 2: THE AWAKENING

WAKE UP AND SMELL THE HEAVY ARTILLERY

Format: PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Legend Entertainment
Release: Q1 '03
Genre: FPS
Players: 1

If the only experience you've had of the *Unreal* universe is through *Unreal Tournament*, you've missed out on a lot – before that, there was the game that started it all. Having been absolutely aeons in development, Infogrames is nearly ready to release *Unreal 2*, a story-driven FPS game set across ten unique worlds and featuring a wide range of both familiar and all-new weaponry. It's certainly an anticipated title but, from the looks of things, you'll need an absolute beast of a PC to get it running properly. However, if you've got the goods, then *Unreal 2* could be exactly the blast-'em-up you're looking for. More tool-ed-up information next month.



RACING EVOLUZIONE

IT'S ITALIAN FOR 'EVOLUTION' (OR SO WE'RE TOLD)

Format: Xbox
Origin: Italy
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Milestone
Release: February '03
Genre: Racing
Players: 1-2



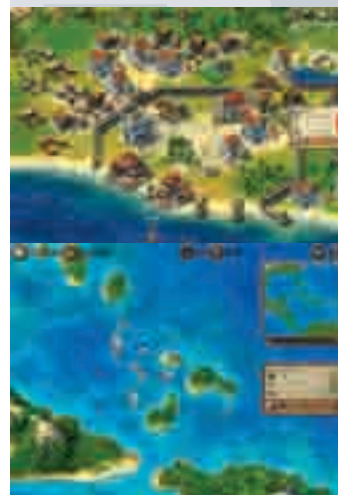
Forget everything you know about realistic racing games – Infogrames is hoping to redefine the genre as we know it with *Racing Evoluzione*, an in-depth driving simulation that goes over and above anything *Gran Turismo* has ever done. Rather than simply driving, *Racing Evoluzione* puts you in charge of your own brand of cars – you start with a small garage but winning races will help you expand your business and ultimately become a dominant force in the car industry. It sounds interesting, although we've yet to see how revolutionary the whole thing will be compared to Sony's past efforts. Look for a complete review next issue.

PORT ROYALE

SO WHAT DO THEY CALL A WHOPPER THEN?

Format: PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Big Ben Interactive
Developer: Ascaron
Release: March '03
Genre: RTS
Players: 1-8

Of all the things we wanted to be when we were younger, the head of a successful shipping trading empire wasn't one of them – but we'll give it a go anyhow and *Port Royale* offers us just such an opportunity. Set in the 17th Century, you have the chance to explore any of the 60 towns available and trade goods to your heart's content. Of course, you're not alone and will have to deal with pirates and other traders along the way – think *Elite* set on a boat and you're pretty much there. With the option to link up over a LAN for multiplayer boating shenanigans too, *Port Royale* could be just the game for all you seafaring PC owners out there.

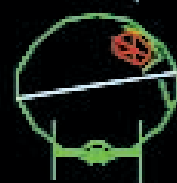
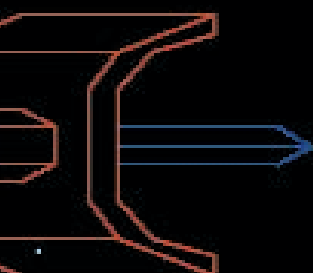
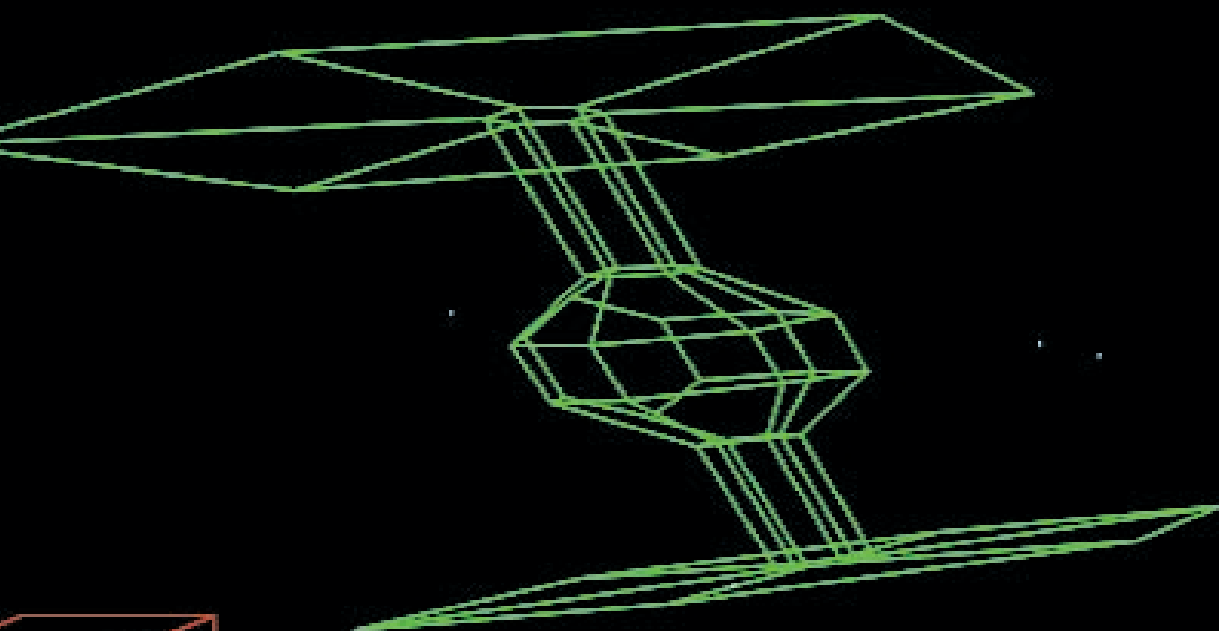


SCORE

00



SHOOT FIRE



FIELD
FIREBALLS

1 WAVE



A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away... **Star Wars Arcade** [Atari] 1983

June 2003

3 Tuesday

* Strategy - Gain forward
↓ ↓ -NR
Ass Games +
terms

ago - Lian @ game

* Attendance + Computer April 4
Tuesday

* Cover Meeting - 10.30

* Workflow document → NR!!!

Cover for games - for sign off

Agree promotion for next issues
- meeting with NR

Organise an extension of the
Plant for Cat



2003 June

Wednesday 4

Let's do Lunch

Behind every great game there's someone working hard to ensure that it gets the right kind of exposure. That person is the PR manager – someone who can, quite literally, make or break a videogames publisher...

The scene: Just outside Woolies. A group of pale, scruffy-looking videogame journalists stand alongside a smartly dressed man brandishing the one thing that those jourmos covet most of all – a credit card. “All right, lads,” he says, “I know the game’s shit, do you want any CDs?”

Though **games™** is not at liberty to reveal the identities of those present, it can disclose that it was a long time ago and that the company that the smartly dressed man was representing is no more.

Those of you who are shocked at the fact that such an incident ever happened in the first place might well be naïve enough to believe that every word of every review of a videogame that has ever been written represents the objective thoughts of the reviewer without any other influence whatsoever. Unfortunately, this almost certainly isn’t the case, and if this depressing scene is indicative of the time, perhaps a good many of those reviews that were written were done so, shall we say, ‘under the influence’.

Moving forward from those heady and exciting days of the Spectrum, Commodore and Amstrad and into those of the Xbox, GameCube and PS2, it is clear that things are very different. Publishing videogames magazines, and indeed the games industry itself, is a much more professional business than in years gone by – cheap bribes are hardly going to cut the mustard with today’s degree-laden and, dare we say it, more sophisticated games hacks who have entered videogame magazine publishing almost certainly as gamers but also, in many cases, fully-qualified journalists.

As befitting the gaming world’s transition from cottage industry to multi-million pound market, the PR manager has, **games™** is pleased to say, matured to reflect those changes. Where unscrupulous PR types may once have had to rely upon the poorly-paid jourmos’ status to tempt them with bounty they might not otherwise be able to afford, the PR manager now has more subtle, but no less effective, means at his or her disposal.

In celebration of this, **games™** takes a look at the world of the PR manager. ▶

Case 1

NAME: ALEX VERREY

JOB DESCRIPTION: PR And Communications Manager, JOYTECH
Key product for 2003: Williams F1 Team Racing Wheel

How did you get into PR?

By accident more than anything. My background rests in TV, where I worked (and still do) as a presenter. I'm probably best known as the character Big Boy Barry from Sky's *GamesWorld* show. Having presented more hours of videogaming TV than anyone in the country, I'm pleased to say that I'm fairly well known in the industry and have made a lot of friends over the years. At ECTS a couple of years ago, one of my buddies, MD of top peripherals company JOYTECH, mentioned that they were looking for someone to do some part-time PR work for them. It suited me as I could split my time between TV and JOYTECH and the rest, as they say, is history.

Describe your typical day.

Start the day at six-ish, with a power jog around Windsor Park. Follow this up with an hour of Tibetan Yoga to recharge the body's Chi points. Meet with Tony Blair to discuss the far-reaching, national economic implications of our new TFT Monitor. As we're based in Windsor, I then join Her Majesty the Queen for a spot of tiffin, before boarding the JOYTECH helicopter for a rooftop meeting with *games™*.

Then I wake up and start work around nine-ish. Spend the morning replying to numerous emails from magazines, newspapers, TV and various media-related guys and girls, all looking to feature or review JOYTECH's gear. Spend some time phoning around my magazine buddies, checking for opportunities to work on promoting JOYTECH peripherals, and making sure everyone has all the samples, images, information and press releases they need.

The afternoon will typically be spent working internally: providing sales with PR related reports, proof-reading packaging or instruction manuals, writing press releases, product-testing some of our latest gear, or coming up with creative text for future releases. To be honest, my work is so varied at JOYTECH, it really is a different job every day. I simply couldn't imagine it any other way and it certainly stops me from getting bored...

How important are good reviews of your products in the

specialist press? Have there been times when the coverage you received had a strong impact on one of your titles?

Good reviews in the specialist press are of paramount importance. Although we like to believe we appeal to the masses, our first and prime audience are usually the devoted gamers who will generally turn to their favourite videogame magazine for a reliable review. A good review in a well-known, popular videogame magazine will usually see interest in the peripheral jump greatly, and thus lead to increased sales.

Are other media such as newspapers and television important to your campaigns? Have they become more important than the specialist press?

We try to maximize publicity for JOYTECH, and thus are obviously eager to receive as much publicity as possible. The specialist press often has the luxury of hitting a mass audience very quickly. We also enjoy coverage in magazines such as *Loaded* however, which will generally sell many more copies than an average videogame mag. We've also featured on TV and in newspapers such as *The Sun*, which again reach millions instead of thousands. However, there is often a downside in that the coverage will typically be much lighter and less informative than the coverage received in the specialist press. It's sad to say that there is also a risk of incorrect or damaging reviews resulting from lifestyle press, as the journalists are rarely as knowledgeable about videogames as members of the specialist press.

What's the most challenging part of your job?

My job is thankfully varied, so I face new challenges on a daily basis. The easiest but most boring answer would be to find new and inventive ways to promote peripherals, which are very often not considered to be as important as software. I guess the real, yet totally egotistical, answer would be to keep my mind focused on a dozen jobs at once, and attempt to make everyone happy all of the time.

Misguided Media

Interestingly, all of our masters of spin agreed, at least in part, that the non-specialist press was of great importance when marketing a product. Though specialist magazines such as *games™* will always play a part in promoting videogames, it is obvious that newspapers that reach a much larger audience are rapidly becoming a very important tool to aid the PR manager's job, as Infogrames PR manager, Simon Callaghan explains:

"Non-specialist media is important and is gradually becoming more so simply because you are reaching a different audience outside of the specialist press, and it is a way of expanding the potential audience of your games".

Also noteworthy is the fact that increasingly games that would otherwise be less favourably viewed by games mags seem to receive glowing reviews and scores as this

example of a review of Acclaim's controversial 'sports' title, *BMX XXX* illustrates:

"This is every Kevin The Teenager's dream. A BMX-riding game which slavishly follows the *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* blueprint, it self-consciously tries to be outrageous.

"Like *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4*, you are allocated missions by characters in the game. For example, you might find yourself having to ferry prostitutes around on the back of your bike, or enduring flaccid jokes about impotence while helping a fireman re-establish his water supply.

"Virtual strippers present the game's rewards, which will either irritate or delight you depending on your age. Play-wise, it is pretty decent, although derivative: it lacks the silky responsiveness of *Tony Hawk's Pro*

"...I join Her Majesty the Queen for a spot of tiffin, before boarding the JOYTECH helicopter for a rooftop meeting with games™..."

Skater 4, and the graphics, at least on the PS2 version, are a bit ropey.

"But it sustains a decent repertoire of tricks and the levels are large, well-designed and pleasingly crammed with detail touches. One of those games which is quite fun to play until someone catches you at it."

While we wouldn't begrudge the *Daily Mirror's* right to an opinion, you have to wonder how the reviewer managed to give this a four-star rating. However, with millions of people who would otherwise probably never read a videogames magazine assuming that the verdict is accurate, we can see why non-specialist press reviews are increasingly important in the world of PR.

Case 2

NAME: SIMON CALLAGHAN

JOB DESCRIPTION: Head of UK PR, Infogrames UK
Key Titles For 2003: Enter The Matrix, Unreal 2

Describe your typical day.

If I'm in the office then the first thing I do is go through my emails, actioning any that are particularly urgent. Next I'll check my voicemail and again action any messages that are urgent. Afternoons I basically spend organising any press trips we may have coming up, negotiating coverage and exclusives with the specialist media, compiling reports for my superiors within Infogrames and sending out code and assets. In addition to that there are the hundred and one things that come up throughout the day that don't fall into any specific activity category. It really is an incredibly busy and diverse job. I literally do not have enough hours in the day and often find myself going home and doing a few hours work in the evening or weekends just to keep on top of things.

How much pressure is there to get coverage of your products in the specialist press?

It really does depend on the product. Titles that are perceived as 'Triple A's are the key titles that the business relies on in terms of generating revenue. These are the ones that need to generate a lot of positive coverage and good review scores in the specialist press in order for retailers to buy them and sell them on to the consumer. Most of the time the big games that the company relies on are very good, which always makes the PR job that much easier – at the end of the day, content is king.

On average, how much do you spend on promoting a title?

Again, it does depend on the game. For a 'Triple A' title you are well in to six figures, and very occasionally seven.

How important are good previews or reviews of your products in the specialist press? Have there been times when the coverage you received had a strong impact on one of your titles?

Good reviews and previews are very important as they give our sales team ammunition to use on retailers when it's time for them to stock a particular title. It is also very important to position your game positively in the mind of the consumer, as they are incredibly spoilt for choice in terms of the number of titles out there. There are numerous examples where positive coverage of a game that had no heritage or has come out of nowhere has created a groundswell of interest in the minds of consumers through the specialist press and has gone on to become a major hit. The original *Driver* on PSone immediately springs to mind as an example. The converse can also be true and again there are numerous examples. I'm far too polite to name any.

How important are other media such as newspapers and television to your campaigns? Have they become more important than the specialist press?

Non-specialist media is important, and is gradually becoming more so, simply because you are reaching a different audience outside of the specialist press. More important than the specialist press? No. The specialist audience is your target audience, an audience in itself that is growing larger by the day. Specialist consumers pick up and read games magazines to educate themselves on nothing but games. Non-specialist media is a tough sell, and probably will be for some time, simply because you're competing with so many other mediums for the disposable income of the consumer.



PR get-togethers tend to be very relaxed. Definitely casual dress...

The Code of Spin

The things that some PR people say... and what they really mean.

PR Speak: This is nearly-finished code. You can review it, but I can assure you that any of the bugs or problems that you encounter when playing the game will be ironed out for the finished build.

What this actually means: This is pretty much finished. I know this game is flawed in so many ways that it's embarrassing, but if this line fobs you off then the chances are you'll give the review a more favourable score and I'll get my bonus.

PR Speak: Go easy on the preview – it's still early code...

What this actually means: This game is actually poor and is likely to remain so. I shan't be giving you review code, but a decent preview might engender some interest from your readers and they might

just buy it on the strength of that...

PR Speak: I'm not the sort of PR person who gets pissed off if you give one of my games a low score.

What this actually means: You've never given any of my games a low score, but if you do I will be seriously pissed off about it.

PR Speak: I'm expecting this game to get very good scores across the board.

What this actually means: If you don't give this game a good score, I'll refuse to deal with you in the future.

PR Speak: We're not getting any review copies of the game until it hits the shelf.

What this actually means: There's no way I'm sending this game to you, you'll massacre it in your review. However, you're more than welcome to buy a copy when it gets released, at least that way we'll get some sales.

PR Speak: I don't want you to review the import version of the game.

What this actually means: I have a PAL exclusive signed up with a rival mag and you'll ruin that for me. [Which is fair enough]

Or

The game's awful and if you review it from the US/Japanese code you'll kill off any chance we can recoup the extortionate money we paid for that potentially lucrative licence. And we really don't want that.



Case 3

NAME: PHIL ROBINSON

JOB DESCRIPTION: PR Manager, Midway Games

Key Titles for 2003: *Defender*,
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance

How long have you worked in PR?

It must be near to five years: two years in music and then three years to date in the games industry.

Why did you decide to switch from music to videogame PR?

I had always been into music and was always interested in playing drums, so I kind of fell into music PR from mixing in those circles. I had great fun learning the trade and spending a hell of a lot of good times at some great parties. I guess after a while I felt I really wanted to carve a career out for myself in PR and I found with the music industry that people didn't always keep their promises, so took the decision to expand my knowledge in other areas and knew music to be something I could always come back to as I had some great contacts.

After spending a little bit of time in fashion, I was having a few drinks with someone at the *Top Of The Pops* bar and was talking about how I wanted to go back into PR and that I was always very much into games. The person with me said that I would be perfect for the position that was going at Midway and that I should go for an interview. The rest is history – here I am...

How much pressure is there to get coverage of your products in the specialist press?

When you're working with a product, you want to get the best coverage you can and it becomes a very personal thing and you put a hell of a lot of passion into it. You want to try and secure the best page count you can and also hope that it will

do well when it comes to review, but you can only do your bit and hope that the game is going to kick ass. They sometimes say you're only as good as your last game and it's a great feeling when it all comes together. Front covers in your reception area always look good.

How important are good previews or reviews of your products in the specialist press? Have there been times when the coverage you received had a strong impact on one of your titles?

This is a very important part of the process because you have to think that when your product goes to press, your company may be in the process of selling units into retail and a hell of a lot of those guys are going to be waiting to see the press reaction. If it isn't that great, why should they buy big amounts of units?

This then has a knock-on effect to you as a company, maybe not hitting your sales targets. I think every company has experienced this at some point. Sometimes you might be okay if the product you're working with is a very big licence and is already known to the public.

How important are other media such as newspapers and television to your PR campaigns?

Very important, as you'll be reaching a much wider audience and that's a very important part of your plan – you want whoever it be, gamer or not, to know that your product is out there. This sort of coverage would help you to maximize that. You have to remember that it's not just the people who read the gaming mags that are buying your titles, it's also the mums and dads out there that want to be getting the best games around for their kids or friends. Maximum impact – that's what it's all about.



PR managers have the gift of the gab. So this must be a pic from an interview then.



Elsewhere, developers get on with the real work... (ahem).

It's all about the money...

One of the main reasons why PR managers have become such a potent force is money.

Put simply, anything up to and beyond 90 per cent of all videogames that are released in any one year lose money. Publishers and developers rely on so-called 'Triple-A' titles to not only generate revenue but also to absorb the massive losses of other titles released during the year.

"...they sometimes say you're only as good as your last game and it's a great feeling when it all comes together. Front covers in your reception area always look good"

As such, the success or failure of a publishing house or developer can rest heavily upon the ability of a PR manager, along with some deft marketing, to ensure that all of its titles get the kind of coverage that will sell its games to the largest number of people. Failure to do so can create potentially catastrophic results. As this table shows, developers simply have to shift large numbers of games to make a reasonable return on their games.

For the self-funded developer, only by having a big hit can they hope to make any money. Developers who receive a cash advance have got money in the bank, whereas self-funded are out of pocket as soon as

the development process begins.

As a consequence, it is vital that a PR manager simply has to do his or her job to try to ensure that the largest number of people are made aware of a title in the hope of getting those sales...

Game funding	After £1,200,000 advance	Self-funded
Ave. wholesale price	£13	£13
Royalty %	25%	35%
Royalty £	£3.25/unit	£4.55/unit
Unit sales	Receipts to developer	Receipts to developer
50,000 (low)	nil	£227,500
150,000 (medium)	nil	£682,500
350,000 (high)	nil	£1,592,500
1,000,000 (super high)	£2,050,000	£4,550,000

Case 4

NAME: JENNIE KONG

JOB DESCRIPTION: PR Manager, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe
Key titles and products for 2003:
Eye-Toy, Primal Rage, Sony Broadband and PS2 Network Adapter

How did you get into PR?

Since I was six I knew I wanted to work in the entertainment industry. I've always wanted to work in production as I come from quite a creative hands-on background, but PR seemed like a more secure, fun and social job when I was 15. I studied at college, and then Media and Technology at uni and took it from there.

How long have you worked in PR?

Altogether I'd say nearly three years now. I was fortunate to get a lot of experience behind me while I was studying at university. At the beginning I looked to temping jobs in sales and also in technical support before I figured that the sooner I got into the PR field, the more experience I would get. My two loves are film and games, and the games industry was a friendlier job market at the time. I'm still quite young at 23, but I think I've really got stuck into it.

In that time, how has your role changed?

I'd say I've been very fortunate in the diversity and range of experiences I've had over the years. It's been a fun path looking back as I started out as a marketing and corporate hospitality assistant at SEGA Amusements, then went onto Cake [Nintendo's creative agency] and now Sony. My role as the PR exec for Nintendo of Europe was crazy busy as I juggled looking after the PR and co-ordinating assets with Japan and the US. I think I worked on four corporate media, helping in strategic PR for Europe, organising joint third-party systems – Game Boy, N64, GBA and Nintendo GameCube. I decided I wanted to continue working with a top hardware company who also had great vision in the future of software as well as being a highly respected and innovative publisher. SCEE really care about the European market and have established themselves as a superb developer as well. Being at SCEE as specialist PR manager is amazing because it means I can also get back to the roots where I will work closer to those who love videogames just as much as me.

What are the most important skills needed to be a successful PR manager?

I think a successful PR manager needs to have great communication and negotiation skills, be genuinely enthusiastic with what they're promoting and also maintain a keen awareness of the media in general. This obviously needs to be backed with efficiency, planning, reliability, friendliness, creativity, being a great team player as well as the ability to keep a cool head, think laterally and juggle about a hundred balls – literally.

How important are good previews and reviews of your titles in the specialist press? Have there been times when the coverage you received had a strong impact on one of your titles?

I think specialist media are very important at all levels and, like other specialist media in film or music, they become the opinion formers of the. As games are such a visual medium, very nice preview screens and preview write-ups by key titles definitely lay the foundations to generating good word of mouth within the games community.

The Getaway, for example, was such a massive title and received a lot of support from games magazines during development that it got a lot of people excited about both the game and the innovative and technical capabilities of gaming on the PS2.

How important are other media such as newspapers and television to your PR campaigns? Have they become more important than the specialist press?

I think specialist and mainstream media are both important in their own right. They are the bread and butter to a great marketing campaign and without the other it's not as fruitful. Personally, I think mainstream media are important to continue breaking videogaming culture out of its niche. National media have contributed immensely to establishing it as the \$20+ billion industry it is today, and hopefully it will mean that videogames will push out even further and be enjoyed by girls, families and the older generation one day.

If A Job's Worth Doing...

Big business is the spin. So much so that games that cost £2 million to develop can have up to £10 million spent on global marketing. The pressure to get it right is enormous, but here is one of our favourite attempts to generate awareness of a publisher's game...

Those Not About Turok

Turok Evolution was an important game for Acclaim, so important in fact that it needed more than a little push in the old PR and Marketing departments. Naturally, the advertising budget was spent but it was clear that that wouldn't be enough. Those clever bods at Acclaim came up with all

manner of clever ways to introduce the Fireseed to PS2 and Xbox owners – and, to be fair, even we were

impressed at how far they were prepared to go. Along with offering money to people willing, for reasons never explained, to change their name to Turok our personal favourite has to be the widely-reported story of a man who camped out for 50 days outside the Electronics Boutique store on Oxford Street in London. Apparently unwilling to pre-order, our hero, Jason Read, simply had to wait outside the store come rain or shine – the small matter of the huge amount of press coverage that pushed *Turok Evolution* into the public's consciousness was but a happy coincidence (yeah, right). The fact remains that after a gargantuan push for what was arguably a lacklustre game, sales of *Turok Evolution* were mightily impressive. Well done Acclaim.





The *Metroid* series might have its roots on the NES but, like a fine wine, it seems to have improved with age. Move over, Lara – our hearts belong to Samus Aran now...

REVIEWS

Metroid Prime	96	<i>GameCube</i>
House Of The Dead 3	100	<i>Xbox (Arcade)</i>
The Getaway	102	<i>PlayStation2</i>
Sim City 4	104	<i>PC</i>
Dead To Rights	106	<i>Xbox (GC, PlayStation2)</i>
Metroid Fusion	108	<i>Game Boy Advance</i>
Mario Party 4	110	<i>GameCube</i>
Bubble Bobble: Old And New	111	<i>Game Boy Advance</i>
Shinobi	112	<i>PlayStation2</i>
Phantasy Star Online: Episode I & II	114	<i>GameCube</i>
The Sims	116	<i>PlayStation2 (PC)</i>
Auto Modellista	118	<i>PlayStation2</i>
Battle Engine Aquila	119	<i>Xbox (PlayStation2)</i>
Ikaruga	120	<i>GameCube (Dreamcast)</i>
Ape Escape 2	122	<i>PlayStation2</i>
ToeJam & Earl III: Mission To Earth	123	<i>Xbox</i>
Zelda: Link To The Past	124	<i>Game Boy Advance</i>
Sly Cooper And The Thievius Raccoonus	126	<i>PlayStation2</i>
Star Wars: Bounty Hunter	127	<i>PlayStation2 (GameCube)</i>

THE AVERAGE

Despite representing an industry in which high scores mean everything, **games™** is not a magazine that marks with the majority. A lot of people think that anything below 7 (7.0, 70%, whatever) is a bad score – we don't.

Going on a scale of one to ten, five is the average – average being a game that does what it sets out to do without attempting to do it better than anyone else. If a game gets five, you'll get some enjoyment out of it but nothing more, simple as that. What's more, we won't be swayed by PR people telling us what a game's like – we only decide once we've played each game to death and, in the majority of cases, to completion. If a game's bad,

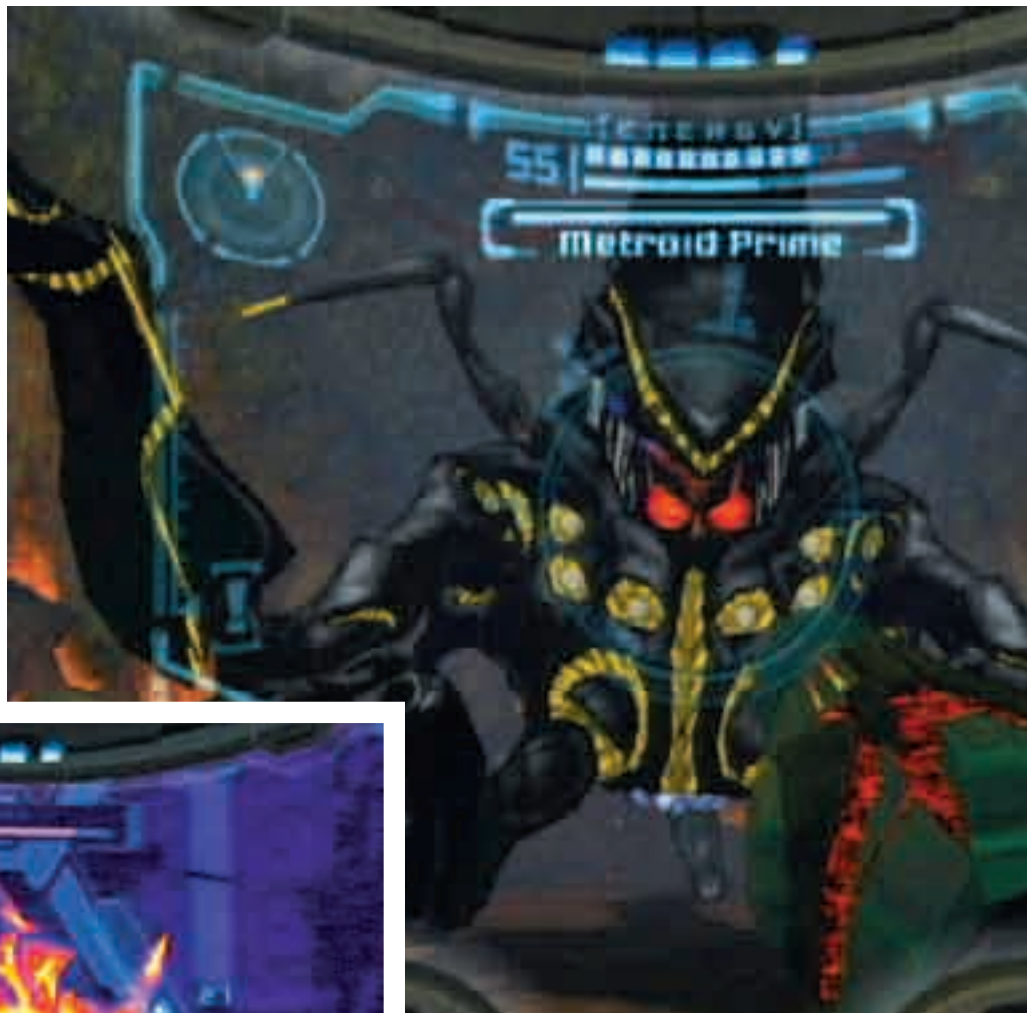
we'll make sure you know; if it's great, we'll sing its praises. At the end of the day, we're just here to help you decide what's worth your hard-earned cash. After all, if it wasn't for you, we'd be out of a job.



■ See? See? This flying nasty is "genetically enhanced" – that's what'll happen to GM tomatoes if you don't watch them.



■ "4.8 trillion teratons"? That's got to be made up. Might as well be 'a trendfillion gigamoths' or something.



■ Some of the Space Pirates you'll encounter have learnt how to cloak themselves. Luckily, Samus's rather tasty Thermal Visor makes them stand out like a sore thumb.

■ We did warn you – some of the bosses are absolutely huge and incredibly ugly. This bloke spilt your pint and looked at you funny – you gonna take him outside, or what?

■ Mechanoid bird-cum-scorpion things are probably best when they're dead. So start shooting, soldier...



games™ **FUSED**

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

EXPLORATION: True to the game's platform roots, you can explore some absolutely huge levels.

VIEWPOINT: The new first-person viewpoint opens up a novel way of presenting the world of Metroid.



THE BEST GAMECUBE GAME SO FAR. HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

METROID PRIME

The times, they are a-changing – and they're changing a lot quicker than some people might think. If, for example, you'd told us a couple of years ago that Nintendo was planning to farm out development of some of its most prized franchises to other companies, we'd have given you a swift clip round the ear and laughed you out of the building. Still, this was when the Nintendo we all knew and loved was a company that stood by its belief that cartridge technology was still the way forward for videogames. It was when Nintendo kept virtually all of its development under wraps and refused to let members of the gaming press, let alone the public, see unfinished versions of games. Most importantly though, it was when Nintendo was a company that defiantly stood by its family-styled values and balked at releasing games that didn't fit in with their ethos. But now we find ourselves with a relatively new Nintendo – with a high-powered CD-based console under its wing, a wide selection of mature titles to be proud of and the recent release of demo discs in Japan, the firm has come a long way. Considering all this progress has come about in little over two years though, the thought of a top-notch Nintendo title being developed by someone other than Nintendo itself doesn't that far-fetched after all.

Of course, when *Metroid Prime* was first announced back in August 2000, there was a mixture of jubilation and concern. On the one hand, everyone was pleased that Samus was making a welcome return to a Nintendo console; on the other, the thought of a second-party firm making a prized Nintendo game was worrying. Then the first screenshots appeared on the internet and it all started to fall apart – eyebrows were raised, foreheads were furrowed and various other body parts showed concern in ways only they knew how, as we all saw something that looked distinctly un-Nintendo. Yes, we were worried – especially after seeing video footage of the game at E3 2001 that looked so bad. We wondered what on earth Nintendo was playing at. Needless to say, our concerns never really left us despite having had several chances to see how far *Metroid Prime* had come – in fact, it wasn't until we sat down with our own copy of the game that we 'got it'.

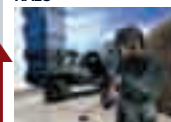
You see, *Metroid Prime* isn't a great game; it's one of the best games we've played in a very, very long time. Certainly, the use of a first-person viewpoint may discourage a lot of hard-core *Metroid* fans by making them think that the game won't have the feel of previous efforts. Conversely, FPS fans may be put off by the whole adventure

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
GameCube
ORIGIN
US
PUBLISHER
Nintendo
DEVELOPER
Retro Studios
PRICE
£39.99
RELEASE
March '03 (US: Out Now)
PLAYERS
1

HALO



BETTER THAN

JUST LIKE



SUPER METROID

24:00 TIMELINE HIGHLIGHTS

THE BEST BITS IN THE GAME AND WHEN YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE THEM...

00:20 MINUTES



○ The opening training section allows you to explore a derelict space cruiser and get to grips with the controls, while realising that *Metroid Prime* is great.

04:00 HOURS



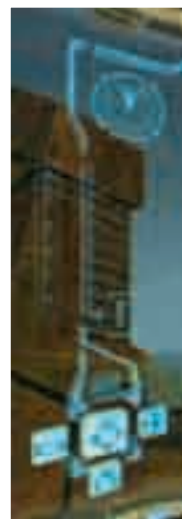
○ Some steady progress sees you passing through the Chozo Ruins and reaching the frozen wastes of Phenandra, while realising that *Metroid Prime* is really incredible.

3 DAYS



○ After tracking down the ancient artefacts of the Chozo, you'll be facing off with Ridley... while realising that *Metroid Prime* is the best GC game, period.

■ The phrase 'fight fire with fire' doesn't mean much here – it's far better to blast this flaming beastie with your freezing Ice Beam.



KEEPING IT OLD-SCHOOL

If you're a major *Metroid* fan, no doubt you'll already have *Metroid Fusion* too – the top-notch GBA game (see page 108). In typical Nintendo style, having both games opens up some gameplay bonuses: link the games via the GBA/GC Link Cable and you can transfer data to unlock some tasty extras. Completing *Metroid Prime* and then connecting *Metroid Fusion* lets you upload Samus's Fusion suit into the GameCube game. However, finishing *Metroid Fusion* and linking it to *Metroid Prime* unlocks the best extra of all – a full version of the original NES *Metroid*.

“NOT SURPRISINGLY, METROID PRIME'S PLOT FEATURES MORE THAN ENOUGH FAMILIAR ELEMENTS TO KEEP FANS HAPPY”

▷ side of it all. The important thing to know about *Metroid Prime* though is that it's *not* a true first-person shoot-'em-up game; if you bring that thought to the table, you're going to come away sorely disappointed. But anyone who's expecting something totally fresh and unique from the *Metroid* style of gameplay is in for a real treat indeed.

Much like *Super Metroid* on the SNES, *Metroid Prime* breaks you in nice and gently by introducing the basics of the game in a small prologue section; in this case, aboard a derelict space cruiser. It's this section that's crucial when it comes to getting to grips with the controls. Strangely, *Metroid Prime's* control system is the thing that has attracted the most criticism – the lack of dual control used by games like *TimeSplitters 2* and the fact that the control set-up isn't changeable has certainly annoyed a few gamers. These gripes all focus on the fact that *Metroid Prime* doesn't play like a first-person shoot-'em-up – mainly because it isn't one. Certainly, the first-person perspective and constant gunplay might give the impression that it's an FPS, but that's where the similarities end. What *Metroid Prime* does instead is graft the well-established *Metroid* formula of in-depth exploration and extensive platform jumping onto a first-person shoot-'em-up, creating a totally new experience in the process rather than just another FPS.

□ As with its 2D cousins, the focus here is on exploration, as well as plenty of puzzle solving

and acquiring power-ups that allow you to progress into unexplored areas – the shooting of enemies, just like in other *Metroid* games, is entirely secondary. What's surprising is just how well the platform-based gameplay actually works when brought into a 3D environment. Having experienced games like *Turok* that tried to introduce platform-jumping elements but failed miserably, you might think that the style just isn't suited to the first-person genre. In *Metroid Prime* though, it's clear that the level design has been created specifically with the platform/adventure genre in mind. Even the dramatic boss fights that popped up on a regular basis in the old games transcribe well into 3D – in fact, the new first-person viewpoint makes the sheer size of each boss even more apparent. It's a formula that works absolutely perfectly, despite sounding like a recipe for disaster.

□ Not surprisingly, *Metroid Prime's* plot features more than enough familiar elements to keep fans happy, while not being so intimidating as to keep people new to the *Metroid* universe at bay. Yes, those dastardly Space Pirates are back again and up to no good – this time, they've discovered a rare source of radioactive material that can be used to mutate harmless creatures into mindless killers. Yes, the Metroids are still being used as test subjects, although that doesn't make them any more friendly. And yes, only Samus can save the day and stop the Space Pirates from creating the ultimate attack force. *Metroid Prime's* plot is far more integral to the gameplay than in previous outings such as *Super Metroid*. Each



■ The Chozo Artefact Temple – where things start to get interesting...



■ If you need a top-up for your health and ammunition, you can always return to Samus's ship back at the landing site.



I HAVE THE POWER

Although Samus starts her adventure fully tooled-up, an explosion towards the end of the opening section renders much of her Power Suit useless, leaving her stranded on Tallon IV with virtually no abilities whatsoever. Fortunately, there's help at hand in the form of the Chozo, an ancient race of creatures who created Samus's suit in the first place. While the Chozo have been extinct for years, their technology is still around – although you'll have to find it to use it. It's scattered across Tallon IV, so finding all of it is going to be tricky. More often than not, you'll have to solve a complex puzzle or blast your way through some mighty big bosses before you can grab it. Then, of course, you'll have to work out when to use it...

new area is ushered in with a genuine reason for you to go there, rather than simply because you've acquired the means to access it. However, any fears that this robs the game of its freeform structure can be allayed straight away because you can still go wherever you want. *Metroid Prime* does keep things moving through an integrated hint system; a short time after you complete an objective, the game will give you a brief map scan of where you should be going next if you're not already heading that way. The more hard-core explorers amongst you though will be pleased to hear that if you don't want to be told what to do, you can switch the hint system off and make the game feel that much closer to its older SNES counterpart.

Indeed, it's probably the fact that *Metroid Prime* does feel so much like the SNES version that we love it so much – as an example of the platform/adventure genre, *Super Metroid* is probably one of the most revered and respected games ever created. To that end, everything that you remember about *Super Metroid* being wonderful is present and correct in *Metroid Prime*; the wide range of weaponry and power-ups, the absolutely massive levels and the diverse puzzles are all here, but so are *Metroid* elements like the Morph Ball and Grappling Hook that you'd never expect to work in a regular first-person game. The magical thing is though, you don't have to be a

total *Metroid* enthusiast to realise that *Metroid Prime* is the best GameCube game out today. It's obvious from the start that the graphics and sound are beyond anything on the console, but it's the in-depth gameplay that'll have you utterly hooked.

Despite all our praise though, we still have to justify one thing: given our slightly harsh scoring system (something that we're aware has already annoyed several publishing companies), why is *Metroid Prime* worth maximum points? Well, it's quite simple. While no game is ever perfect, ten out of ten doesn't necessarily indicate that. Instead, a game that scores full marks should be one that not only offers an incredible gameplay experience, but also an experience that you can't find anywhere else. If you want examples you only have to look at *Super Mario 64*, *Final Fantasy VII*, *Ocarina Of Time*, *Gran Turismo* and the arcade version of *StreetFighter 2*; games that, had **games™** been around at the time of their release, would all have scored ten out of ten simply because they totally revolutionised the genre they represented. It's this distinction that turns a great game into something truly special – a distinction that *Metroid Prime* displays in spades, which is why we feel it deserves a 'perfect' ten. Buy it, play it, love it and then play it all over again – there really is no other way to describe it. Just brilliant. Utterly brilliant.

FAQs

Q. IS IT BIG?

Enormously so – even hardcore *Metroid* fans will be hard-pushed to get through in less than 15 hours, and even then they won't find everything.

Q. DODGY CONTROLS?

The only people who complain about the controls are ones who approach *Metroid Prime* as an FPS. It's not though, and the controls soon become second nature.

Q. NO MULTIPLAYER?

Definitely not, because it's not a first-person shoot-'em-up. Adding a multiplayer mode would have turned the game into something more generic and familiar.



■ This chap shows up as a boss early on and then starts reappearing as a regular enemy once you're more powerful.



■ You'll come through here early on and then have to return much later once you've found a means of melting the frozen fountain.

VERDICT 10/10

ESSENTIAL – WORTH BUYING A GAMECUBE FOR ALONE



■ Challenging as hell but enjoyable nonetheless, Time Attack mode is a welcome inclusion to the line-up. You've got unlimited life but take a hit and you start running out of precious time. But blast the undead into next week and you get extra seconds.



■ Crowds like this are easily dealt with thanks to your trusty Boomstick. Don't use a broomstick, mind. That would be useless.



■ One of the later areas features a torch that shines light wherever you point your gun – a nice touch.

ZOMBIES, GUNS, MUTILATION, DIRE SCRIPTING... SEGA'S SEMINAL SHOOTER RETURNS

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 3

FAQs

Q. IS THERE AN OFFICIAL GUN?

Microsoft hasn't produced a lightgun, but Joytech and Mad Katz have both released excellent third party models.

Q. HOME EXTRAS?

Aside from a full version of *House Of The Dead 2*, there's only Time Attack to keep you occupied.

Q. ARE THERE SPECIAL WEAPONS?

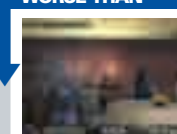
No, but the main pistol has been replaced with a shotgun, hence the shells in the corner of the screen.

ENDGAME...



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



TIME CRISIS 2

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED

Xbox

ORIGIN

Japan

PUBLISHER

SEGA

DEVELOPER

Wow Entertainment

PRICE

£39.99

RELEASE

Out Now

PLAYERS

1-2

When this game was first announced, the Xbox seemed like an odd home for the latest instalment of zombie-blasting fun. Logic would have seen

it follow *Vampire Night* to Sony's console – with an excellent official lightgun already on the market, the PlayStation2 was the obvious choice. But SEGA has never been known for doing the obvious (monkeys? In balls, you say?) and now we see why *House Of The Dead 3* has appeared on the Xbox – it's as visually beautiful as anything SEGA has cooked up in recent years and really takes advantage of the machine's processing prowess.

Following on from its predecessors, this third helping of zombie eradication sees Rogan's daughter Lisa teaming up with his old partner 'G' to rescue him from yet another undead-populated nightmare. Cue some of the hammiest acting this side of *Resident Evil* and plot twists even *Beano* readers will see coming a mile off. And then the shooting starts – *The House Of The Dead* is officially open for business. This time around, gameplay sticks mainly to the tried and tested formula –

there's not much to do other than shoot zombies. A lot. And fast. Unfortunately, some of the better route-branching features from the previous game have been lost in the translation to the Xbox. The clever features like shooting keys to access new areas or blowing locks off doors are replaced with a more *Virtua Cop*-style branching system. By this, we mean you're occasionally offered an obvious choice of several routes and shooting a sign chooses between them. As a result, the action seems a little more broken-up than it probably should. Another bone of contention is the level design; while anyone can see that the areas look fantastic, it's more than slightly irksome that three of the six areas look worryingly familiar, even to the point of several re-treading the same path. If the locales were as varied as the excellent enemies, this would be an absolute treat but we can't help feeling slightly cheated when half of the game takes place in near-identical settings.

For all this regressiveness, *House Of The Dead 3* does do its fair share of innovating. Time Attack mode takes the tired lightgun genre on a refreshing



BACK TO THE OLD SCHOOL

Possibly the best feature of *House Of The Dead 3* is the inclusion of the full home version of *House Of The Dead 2* as an extra. Once you finish the game, you'll be able to take on the previous shooter in all its Dreamcast glory. Well, nearly all. Unfortunately, the porting process hasn't treated *HOTD2* particularly well and certain areas suffer from slowdown, which isn't a huge problem but it makes the prequel seem like a last-minute idea rather than a fully-fledged extra feature. Despite this, *HOTD2* and all its extra modes have aged rather well – it still manages to outshine the likes of *Dino Stalker* and *Ninja Assault*. In fact, we found ourselves wanting to play *HOTD2* much more than the main title. Which is rather telling.

jaunt by ditching the life system entirely. Replacing it is a time gauge that ticks down as you progress through the game – take a hit and you'll lose precious time but produce some fancy marksmanship and you'll regain some lost seconds. More time is rewarded for better shooting so the normal *HOTD* trigger-finger workout is useless – you'll need to have a *Time Crisis* level of accuracy to make it through this mode as once you run out of time, it's game over. No continues, no nothing. In all fairness, while this is a unique and fun game mode, it could have been better implemented. A shotgun is hardly the best weapon with which to attempt precision shooting and you'll often lose out on time bonuses as stray buckshot clips nearby targets.

In terms of extra features, SEGA has always been the leader of its field, offering the player rearranged game modes, items and training modes.



■ This time, instead of saving civilians you have to help your partner.



This is one of its first titles in recent years not to provide such additional replay value (aside from the Time Attack mode) – instead, the somewhat odd decision has been made to include Dreamcast classic *House Of The Dead 2* in full. Frankly, we're surprised that the first game isn't here too, although that could just be a case of our trigger-fingers getting the better of us. If nothing else, *HOTD2* shows just what should have been present in console version number three. The sheer diversity of the game modes and the amount of extras that were added remain arguably unrivalled to this day.

Much as we hate to admit it, we're not overly impressed with *House Of The Dead 3*. Believe us, we want to be; the classic series looks better than ever in its new home. But that's just it – its appearance seems to have got the better of it. The actual gameplay is a leap backwards from some of

what we've seen recently and a lot of the skill has been removed by replacing the pistol with a spread weapon. As a result we're left with a dumbed-down shooter in fancy clothes that offers brief bursts of fun in moderation – but then such is the nature of the genre. With little extra replay value on top of the included prequel, you don't even need to go near a Dreamcast or an arcade to see how this genre should be done – just play through *House Of The Dead 3* once to unlock a perfect example.



VERDICT 5/10
A BOG-STANDARD EFFORT FROM SEGA



■ Fat zombies – easier to hit but they take so many bullets...



■ Dammit, that smarts. Why do those zombies wear false nails?



DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED

PlayStation2

ORIGIN

UK

PUBLISHER

Sony

DEVELOPER

Team Soho

PRICE

£39.99

RELEASE

Out Now

PLAYERS

1

GRAND THEFT AUTO AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS?

THE GETAWAY

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, welcome to development hell. On your left, you'll see possibly the most delayed game ever, *Duke Nukem*

Forever – this project has been in production since practically the beginning of time itself. Cast your eyes right now and you may be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of Sony's most elusive title, something much more interesting. Originally conceived at the same time as the PlayStation2 launch, this rare specimen has undergone countless evolutions to be here today. In fact, its mere existence is as remarkable as the feats of which it is capable. Early claims of extinction, disability and even non-existence will be proved false by what you'll see here today. Ladies and gentlemen, it gives us great pleasure to present to you... *The Getaway*.

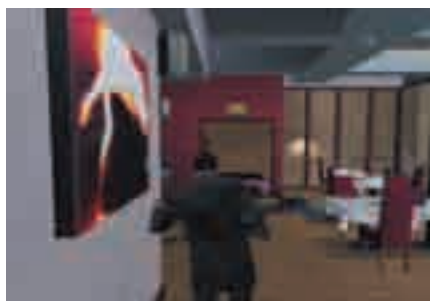
And as if by magic, *The Getaway* appeared on shop shelves everywhere. There was a time when so little was said about Team Soho's crime

romp that it was widely believed to have been canned. Some cynics saw the announcement of *The Getaway* as a direct retaliation to the Dreamcast's seminal *Metropolis Street Racer*. While Bizarre Creations's racer re-created sections of famous towns, Sony claimed it could go one better and create a game based around the whole of London. Although this seemed a little far-fetched, shots started to emerge clearly showing familiar landmarks and vehicles; could Sony really pull it off? It may have taken its sweet time in coming, but pull it off it has...

If nothing else, *The Getaway* is an incredible technical showcase for the Sony console – clearly the least powerful of the 'big three', every drop of processing power has been squeezed from the machine to prove that the PS2 is still in the running. From the real vehicles to actual London stores and landmarks, the visual polish is undeniable. Even the audio is impressive – engine noise, ambience and voice-acting are all of a



■ You're either hiding or you're guarding the world's biggest pile of booze. Both of which are noble pastimes.



■ Leaning on walls allows you to rest up a little – this is the only way to recover health.



■ Umm, oh dear. I don't think that's supposed to happen. And, what with this being London, you'll be roundly ignored by passers-by. They'll probably think you're some sort of street performer. Still, better than being one of those idiots who covers himself in silver paint and stands still for seven hours.





■ Need a car? Just whip out a firearm and most drivers will gladly lend you their wheels. Which is kind of them.

FAQs

Q. WHERE'S THE HUD GONE?

There are no on-screen meters, gauges or arrows to clutter the view. Bloodstains show injuries, indicators point you in the right direction.

Q. HOW'S THE FRAME RATE?

Much improved since we first saw it. Still not perfect but surprisingly smooth nonetheless.

Q. REAL CARS?

While not actually credited, the vehicles are superb re-creations of the real things. Go on, try telling us that's not a Vectra...



■ I think it's safe to say that they won't fight back any more...



■ Hurrah for the police, setting a fine example of road safety and car handling for us all.

staggeringly high quality, but then lengthy development will have facilitated this. In fact, in terms of presentation this is probably the most polished and accomplished title available for the PlayStation2. Even menus are impressive and the overall feel is that of a Brit gangster flick knocked out by Guy Ritchie. The lack of an interface is also a brave and cinematic move – instead, some clever touches point out directions and health. For instance, the amount of bloodstains and the way a character moves shows their health, while car indicators flash to point out where you're supposed to be going. Clever stuff.

Obviously, the first comparison most people will draw will be with the *Grand Theft Auto* games – with similar themes of theft and violence, the two do seem more than a little similar. Once you start playing, though, the similarities slowly fade. Rockstar's titles take a much more comedic and

almost arcadey approach to the action while Sony's offering is a more gritty and realistic affair. Car handling and mission structure represent this too: slam into a wall in a Punto and you'll need a new car right away, or get hit by a bus and you won't get up. This realism is evident throughout and it makes the game extremely tricky in places – a nasty collision in a chase will often give the subject enough time to escape. The on-foot sections play less like *GTA* and more like SEGA's *Headhunter* or even, to a lesser extent, *Splinter Cell*; it's a lot stealthier than it may appear. Everything feels much chunkier and generally more real than in *GTA*, which is something of a mixed blessing.

As a game, *The Getaway* is perhaps too structured for its own good. Aside from the Free Roaming mode, the game shepherds you around 24 missions through the eyes of two characters. This is a nice stab at variety and it gives you two

viewpoints on the story but it pales in comparison to the freedom of Rockstar's epic. Occasionally we found ourselves wanting to do our own thing, but the main game doesn't really lend itself too well to such explorative play – the free roaming option ought to have been a greater part of the main gameplay. The fact that it isn't results in an extremely linear game – a real shame given that there are so many well-implemented elements in place. Having been hyped half to death then sinking without a trace, *The Getaway* has been under a lot of fire until very recently. As such, we're pleasantly surprised that not only has it finally emerged, but that it's really quite a sound package. Nice one, geezers...



VERDICT 7/10

NOT QUITE THE CLASSIC IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN...



I'VE BEEN THERE!

After trying to find our way around *Vice City*'s Miami, it's bizarre to jump into *The Getaway* and already know where we're going before we even start. You see, the re-creation of London is so faithful that whether you've only visited our glorious capital once or you work there day in day out, you'll probably at least recognize something. Everything down to the smallest detail has been perfectly copied – all your favourite stores and landmarks are ripe for visiting. Unfortunately, you don't actually get to go into many of the buildings, but given the hard work that *The Getaway* is already doing, this is hardly surprising. In one particularly disappointing incident early on, we took a trip to HMV Oxford Street to see if there were any celebs signing CDs. When we got there we were greeted with a closed shop and a big poster of The Corrs. Bah.

HEADHUNTER



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



GTA: VICE CITY

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED

PC

ORIGIN

US

PUBLISHER

Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER

Maxis

PRICE

£34.99

RELEASE

Out Now

PLAYERS

1

MINIMUM SPEC

PIII 500 or equivalent;
128MB RAM; 16MB
supported Direct3D
capable video card
with DirectX 7.0
compatible driver;
8x CD-ROM

THINK SIM CITY WAS COMPLICATED BEFORE? THINK AGAIN...

SIM CITY 4

As far as boring ideas go, surely the *Sim City* series is one of the duller concepts in videogame history. You make a city. You make it a bit bigger.

And that's it. You don't fight anyone, you don't mass-produce spaceships and you don't run around stealing cars. In fact, if it doesn't involve buildings, utilities or statistics, you probably can't do it. It's only thanks to the brilliant manner in which these games are tackled that such a simplistic concept is somehow turned into an engrossing and life-consuming epic time and time again. Many an adventurous developer has attempted to steal Maxis's thunder; from *Theme Park* to *Zoo Tycoon* via *Civilization*, many have tried, some have come close, but none have surpassed the majesty of the *Sim City* series. Every update brings fresh ideas and innovations, so what treats are on offer after a three year break from *Sim City*?

Of late, the name Maxis is more or less synonymous with *The Sims*, a good franchise that's been bled dry by countless updates – the

audacity of charging £20 for several new items that should have featured in the original game is shameful. It's unsurprising then, that elements from the highly popular family simulator are carried over to the higher-scale *Sim City*. The initial concept differs little from the tried and tested formula – work your way up from watching over several houses to having acres of land and hundreds of thousands of citizens to keep under control. This latest update allows you to get even closer to the action, even down to creating your own Sims, picking them a home and then getting real feedback on the city's evolution from an actual citizen. Not only is this genuinely helpful but it brings with it a kind of '*Sims Lite*' feel – you don't have the level of control of the usual titles, but with so much else to do this is the least of our worries.

Sim City 4 is undeniably beautiful. Provided you're blessed with a decent gaming-standard PC, you'll get to enjoy it in all its glory. But even when toned down to cater for lesser machines there's loads to see and even more going on. Zoom all the way out and you'll see tiny specks moving around your bustling metropolis – on closer inspection you'll find people commuting to work and busy infrastructures heaving with vehicles as surrounding structures operate exactly as they should. Push the view all the way in and you're in for a visual feast; we were pleasantly surprised to

FAQs

Q. INTERNET GOODNESS?

Oh yes. New content such as buildings, maps and landscapes can be downloaded from the Web.

Q. REAL LOCATIONS?

Indeed. Although you start in fictional Maxisland, London and New York (among others) can be rebuilt at your leisure.

Q. WHAT'S THE PLOT?

Oh dear. Let's just say that if you're after an engrossing storyline and complex character evolution, you may want to look elsewhere.



■ There's a strange pleasure to be had in building the Taj Mahal just over the road from a crowded residential area. Or is that just us?



■ Just when you thought your day couldn't get any worse, a ten-storey robot beams in and tramples your house into the ground. Great.



■ As night falls, your Sims pile into popular nightspots such as the drive-in theatre to waste a few hours. The flow of time is so quick that you can actively change between night and day as you wish. If you're not impressed by this kind of power, you probably won't get the most out of *Sim City 4*.



■ For some reason, people seem to be protesting around our town's toxic waste dump. Despatch the boys in blue to sort them out. Damn hippies.

actually see Sims using the basketball courts we provided, chatting in the streets or just relaxing in the park – the level of detail is phenomenal. Sound is, to be fair, a little redundant. The inoffensive smooth jazz drifts in one ear and out the other as an inner city ambience fills the air, exactly as you'd expect going by previous *Sim* titles. Innovations were apparently used up on the rest of the package, but the audio is more than passable as it is.

But despite the overwhelming depth and ingenuity of the city-building process, we had the same problem here that we last encountered with *The Sims*. Minutes turn to hours, hours turn to days of play but suddenly a revelation hits you: 'What am I doing?', 'What's the point?' – you start to question why you're putting so much time into a practically endless game. One of two things happens at this point. If the addiction has taken hold, you'll shake off the mere thought of giving up, dose up on coffee and get back to your mayoral duties. Of course, the other possibility is that you're struck by the fruitlessness of your every deed and immediately jack it all in. Okay, so these may be the extreme circumstances, but you'll more than likely experience a lesser form of one or the other. Complacency (the 'I've bought it so I'll finish it' attitude) is unlikely since there's no point at which you can say for sure that you've finished the game.

So is it a squalid waste of time or the gift that keeps on giving? That's not something we can tell you, but you'll know for yourself several hours down the line. If it appeals to you in that time, you'll probably find yourself as hooked as a student who's just discovered *Civilization 2*. Otherwise, the endless gameplay and overall 'dryness' will most likely

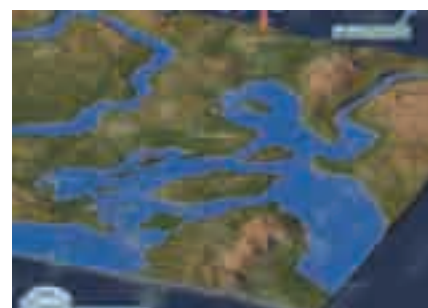


■ Two Big Bens, a Statue of Liberty, the White House and several highly dangerous power plants – the tourist trap is well and truly set.

leave you cold – the need for a definite narrative or a more light-hearted approach (as in *Rollercoaster Tycoon* or *The Sims*) is very evident here. There can be no avoiding the fact that the series as whole is in something of a rut – besides a few slight evolutions with each passing title, there's little to demand repeated updates of what is essentially the same game. If your collection already boasts a *Sim City* game, you can probably live without this fourth wave of cities but, otherwise, this is pretty much as good an endless strategy game as you'll see on any platform.

VERDICT 8/10

GOALLESS GOODNESS – THE SERIES HITS A NEW HIGH



PLAYING GOD

Before you start laying the foundations for a thriving settlement, you have almost boundless control over nature and the elements. After picking out a plot of land for your proposed city, you'll be taken to a zoomed-in version – from here you can raise and lower land, turn day to night, plant foliage and even release herds of wild animals into the plains, deserts and mountains. This deity-like power means you can never blame your surroundings for failure again, and there's much more room for variety between cities. Want a two-part city separated by a bridge over a gaping ravine? You got it. Feel like building a monument atop a record-breaking plateau? Go for it. If you're feeling particularly nasty you can even unleash the fury of the elements across the land with hurricanes and tidal waves being among the available natural disasters. A lot of this power is lost as soon as the city is founded, but it's still a welcome inclusion. Now don't let us catch you whining about that river being in the way ever again...



■ Building houses is as simple as dragging the pointer over an area. Once you've specified where you want them, houses are built as needed.

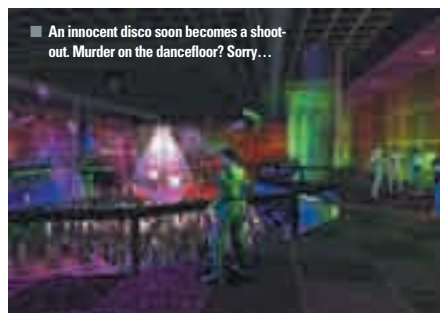




■ Rather than trying to negotiate, Jack's enemies would rather massacre their friends, who conveniently make a reliable shield.



■ Fire extinguishers can be thrown and shot at to take out multiple enemies with a single blast.



■ An innocent disco soon becomes a shoot-out. Murder on the dancefloor? Sorry...



FAQs

Q. IS IT A BIG GAME?

There are 15 chapters and it takes, on average, around an hour to complete each one

Q. HOW MANY ENEMIES AT ONCE?

Gunfights can involve up to about 15 people simultaneously. Laser sighting on the bad guys' guns helps to show which direction they're firing from.

Q. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

Sadly, this is one area of the game that utterly disappoints. Most enemies simply run around shooting or throwing punches at you.

HAS NAMCO'S MAX PAYNE-ALIKE BEEN IMPROVED FOR ITS UK DEBUT?

DEAD TO

After a lengthy development period on PS2, Namco Hometek finally released its moderately anticipated action title *Dead To Rights*, in August last year.

The strange thing was that after a considerable investment on Sony's hardware (both in terms of time and money), the game actually launched as an Xbox exclusive. At the time, it wasn't clear why such a decision was made, though it's since become apparent that it was actually the result of a temporary exclusivity deal struck between Namco and Microsoft – a deal lasting just 90 days. Such a thing isn't uncommon in the wonderful world of videogames – just look at Sony with the *Tomb Raider* and *Grand Theft Auto* licences for proof of that. Even so, while it was reasonably surprising to discover that the PS2 version would follow so soon afterwards, it was even more of a surprise to discover that a GameCube version would also be launching at the same time.

Upon its release in the States, it was clear that Xbox *Dead To Rights* lacked polish in a few key areas – artificial intelligence being a particular problem during some sections of the game. As an example, one level sees Jack Slate (the main character – a cop who has been framed for a crime he didn't commit) thrown in jail, with only his fists to protect him against gangs of criminals who want their revenge on the police. The problem is that each group of convicts has an assigned area (dictated by an invisible wall) in which they operate

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED

Xbox

ORIGIN

US

PUBLISHER

Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER

Namco

PRICE

£39.99

RELEASE

Out Now (Japan: TBC/
US: Out Now)

PLAYERS

1

■ Although it's not integral to the game, a stealth element is included should you want to use it. Right now, with several bad guys with guns running around looking for you, it might be a good idea to start being stealthy and just, er, hide for a bit.



RIGHTS

FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER
BULLETS AND BRAWL: Whether it's fighting or shooting you want, *Dead To Rights* has got it all.
FEEL THE RHYTHM: Rhythm-based mini-games are included to break up the action.

– step outside it and they lose interest in beating you to a pulp and return to aimlessly wandering about. Once you've discovered the exact point at which the AI mysteriously switches off, you can use it to escape from battle and recompose yourself. Worse still, after you've crossed this boundary, foes have a tendency to turn their backs on you, at which point they can be grabbed from behind and disposed of with a simple snap of the neck.

Thankfully, such problems have been reduced ☐ for the PAL translation of the game, as have many other issues that marred the overall experience. We were especially pleased to learn that three difficulty settings have now been implemented, making the game more accessible to a wider audience. *Dead To Rights* was never the easiest of games and still isn't, but the tricky sections have been refined and now rely much more on the player's skill, rather than luck. Some problems do still exist though. The camera isn't perfect and, at its worst, can totally obscure what's happening on-screen. Get too close to a wall during a fight, for example, and Jack can actually clip through the camera and disappear completely off the screen – which is particularly annoying if you're running low on energy.

But, for all its imperfections, *Dead To Rights* ☐ actually does a lot of things right. There's a superb blend of beat-'em-up, shoot-'em-up, adventure and puzzle, and, because these different

elements are so well executed, progression is always exciting – even if some of the levels are a little linear. Of course, learning to make the most of Jack's abilities is an arduous task, but one that's made somewhat easier by the fact that the first level is essentially a training ground. It's here that you learn to disarm enemies – either by grabbing them and breaking their necks or by requesting the help of your trusty dog, Shadow. You can also throw fire extinguishers then shoot at them to create a massive explosion capable of taking out multiple enemies – something that comes in handy right the way through the game. Then, of course, there's the slow-motion bullet-time feature, which has been lifted straight out of *Max Payne* and, combined with the similar themes and storylines, has resulted in the two games being compared on many occasions.

But *Dead To Rights* isn't *Max Payne* – Namco ☐ has tried its best to make something with a lot more variation and depth. Sadly, the fact that it has tried to squeeze so much in has resulted in some elements feeling unfinished and rather shallow. It certainly has its moments, but far too often problems with the camera or connection between characters makes it all feel cheaper than it should. *Dead To Rights* reportedly went way over budget, costing a massive \$4 million to produce, so it really shouldn't be anything other than stunning. As it stands, though, it's a moderately enjoyable title that goes from average to fairly good in places.

RHYTHM AND ACTION

Dispersed amongst the shooting and fighting that makes up the biggest percentage of the gameplay are occasional quick-time button pressing events. The first of these takes place in the training level and involves picking a lock by stopping the separate mechanisms as the markers line-up within the barrel. Slightly more amusing is the *Dancing Stage*-inspired pole dancing scene, in which you have to make a stripper move in time with the music to attract the bouncers. This gives Jack an opportunity to sneak into the club unnoticed, while the guards ogle the decidedly pointy polygon attributes on offer. Later on, these rhythm-based interludes become a little more tricky as you have to prove your strength in jail by competing in a number of physical workouts.



DEAD TO RIGHTS (US)

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

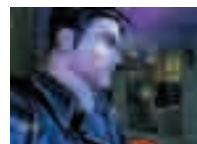
SPLINTER CELL

GAMECUBE £39.99 OUT NOW



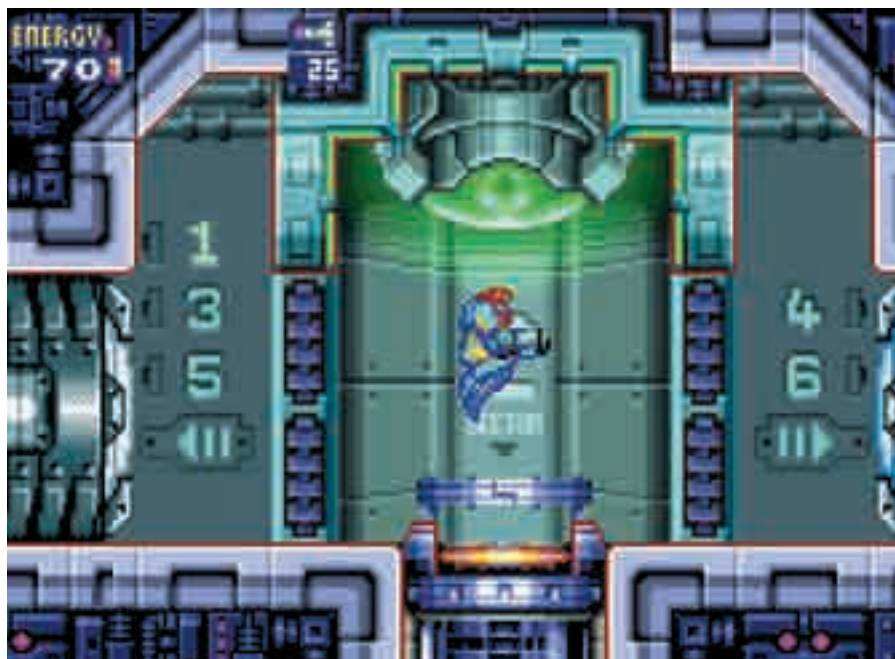
The graphics are as good as those on the Xbox, though the controller isn't ideal and there's no Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound. Otherwise, there isn't that much difference.

PS2 £39.99 OUT NOW



This is the worst-looking version, despite having by far the longest development time. However, the control pad is the most suitable of the three consoles.

VERDICT 6/10
THERE'S FUN TO BE HAD, BUT IT FEELS TOO SCRAPPY



■ There are six main sectors to explore on top of the main deck of the Space Station – that's a whole lot of ground to explore. And remember, they're still big even after they've been miniaturised to fit into your GBA, so they must be *huge*.



■ While you can reclaim Samus's abilities from fallen boss enemies, there are also Data Rooms where specific power-ups can be found.



■ Some areas of the Space Station are without power, which means you'll have to rely on Samus's built-in torch to light the way...

A SNES PORT ON THE GBA THAT'S AN ORIGINAL GAME AS WELL?
NOW WE'RE CONFUSED...

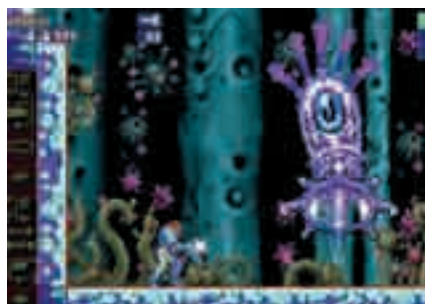
METROID FUSION

Ever since the Game Boy Advance was first announced, it's been clear that Nintendo's strategy for the handheld has focused heavily on the porting of old SNES games. That's not necessarily a bad thing – after all, we lost countless hours racing karts against Mario, saving Hyrule with Link and speeding around Mute City. Still, you'd think that among all the perfect (or even, in some cases, improved) SNES ports that seem to make up the majority of Nintendo's releases for its own machine, it'd find the time to develop the odd new title as well – maybe even one based on a classic franchise that everyone loved the first few times around.

With that being the case, allow us to introduce you to *Metroid Fusion* – a brand new game based on an age-old classic. Confused? Well, it's quite simple really. While *Metroid Fusion* is, to all intents and purposes, a port of *Super Metroid* on the SNES, it's also an entirely new game. Certainly, it uses the same graphics engine as the SNES original (with a few minor touch-ups) as well as the same area-based structure, map display and weapons. All those elements aside though, *Metroid Fusion* is a totally original title with new levels, monsters and even a full-blown plot to boot. Yes, that's right, there's an actual story to go with Samus's new miniature adventure.



■ Each environment plays host to its own selection of aliens and enemies.



■ Try to defeat the, er, arcane contraceptive device? No? Am I wrong?

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

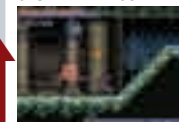
DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

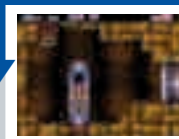
PLAYERS
1

CASTLEVANIA: COTM



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



SUPER METROID

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY LEVELS?

The game doesn't appear to be quite as big as the SNES version, but there's still a good fifteen hours of play here if you want to find everything.

Q. BOSSES?

Yep – big and mean ones. They start off on the 'quite big' side and end up being bloomin' huge... and vicious too.

Q. ANY NEW ABILITIES?

Sort of. While Samus has lost her lovely grappling hook, she can now hang from ledges and clamber across overhead ladders – just like Lara Croft.



■ Don't forget to pick up the power-ups. And wear a scarf – it's nippy in space.

■ The bosses are suitably nasty, so you'll need a fair amount of skill and dexterity in order to beat them and claim back Samus's abilities.



Whereas in previous outings, the plot has been relegated to a very basic premise (go to planet, destroy Metroids/Space Pirates and, er, that's it), *Metroid Fusion* actually has an evolving story that keeps you wondering what's going to happen next. At the start, you're treated to an introduction of epic proportions that explains everything up to the point where you take control of Samus – it's a pretty convoluted story featuring alien parasites known simply as X, Samus's infection with X (and subsequent recovery) and the resulting chaos on board the Biologic Space Lab research station. Naturally, Samus is sent to investigate the incident and once she's arrived things start getting even more interesting thanks to various explosions and surprise appearances – it's a bit like *Eastenders*, only set in space.

The bottom line is that following a devastating ☐ explosion aboard the research station, it's your job to get in there and sort out the aftermath; cue a massive action/adventure game in the same vein as *Super Metroid*. Obviously, the new plot means that there are subtle changes. For example, your recent infestation of the X parasites means you're now immune to their power. Killing any enemy on

board the station reveals the X within, which can then be collected to recover health, missiles or other goodies depending on the colour of the parasite (no more grabbing glowing purple orbs or floating missiles for you). However, the process of exploring each sector of the station to recover your missing abilities, track down extra Missile and Energy Tanks for your Power Suit and generally do what Samus does best is pure *Super Metroid* – not a bad thing by any stretch of the imagination.

☐ Rather than wandering freely and having to remember exactly where each dead end is, *Metroid Fusion* gives you pointers about where to go next through mission briefings in each sector's Navigation Room. While these briefings are key to moving the story along, they're the only vaguely bad point in the game. Some hard-core *Metroid* fans will feel that they take away some of the skill needed to play the game, but they actually remove the need for the aimless wandering that the SNES game featured so heavily. What's more, special items now appear on the map as an open circle,

ME AND MY SHADOW

Although we don't want to give too much of the plot away, the reasons behind the disaster Samus is sent to investigate are a little more complicated than they might first seem. If you don't want to know who the perpetrator is, look away now... because it's you. Yes, there's an evil Samus clone on the loose (codenamed SA-X) and to make matters worse, it's a clone that's fully tooled-up and after your blood. Formed from infected pieces of your old suit that were removed after your parasitic accident, the evil Samus will stop at nothing to bring you down and spread the X virus throughout the research station – even if it means destroying the place in the process. You'll have your work cut out if you want to get out of this one alive...

shrinking into a smaller dot once you've collected them. Seeing as the SNES game marked everything in the same way so you couldn't tell what you'd collected and what you hadn't, this is a definite plus point.

☐ There's no doubt that Nintendo has managed to improve an already fantastic game. *Metroid Fusion* takes the best from each game in the series and combines it with an excellent story to create one of the best 2D examples of the *Metroid* saga yet. It's an absolute must for fans who know the series inside out, but still manages to be a whole lot of fun for anyone who doesn't even know what a *Metroid* is. What's more, it's proof that Nintendo's cutting-edge handheld has more than just a bunch of bog-standard SNES ports up its sleeve. So that should shut the critics up.



VERDICT 8/10
ENGROSSING, CHALLENGING AND A REAL JOY TO PLAY

MULTIPLAYER FRIVOLITIES OF THE HIGHEST ORDER COME TO THE 'CUBE

MARIO PARTY 4

ENHANCED
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL
GAMES GALORE: Loads of mini-games are available – some new, some old, most great.

EXTRA FUN: On top of party games, you can play mini-game tournaments, events and loads more.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED

GameCube

ORIGIN

Japan

PUBLISHER

Nintendo

DEVELOPER

Hudson

PRICE

£39.99

RELEASE

Out Now

PLAYERS

1-4

As an established series on the N64, the *Mario Party* games were widely renowned as some of the finest multiplayer gaming experiences on

the console. Blending some frantic mini-games with a boardgame-style hub where you moved around and collected items, their unique approach set the three games apart from everything else – even today, there's been nothing like them bar a few cheap imitations. But now Nintendo apparently have bigger fish to fry so they've passed the baton to multiplayer veterans Hudson, famed for the classic *Bomberman* series. The question is, can the good ship *Mario Party* still sail with this new captain at the helm? The answer is a resounding yes, but don't expect this vessel to enter any uncharted waters.

Mario Party 4 isn't very different to its predecessors; there have been a few alterations, mainly in terms of new items and mini-games but the structure remains unchanged – Nintendo hit the jackpot with the first *Mario Party* and Hudson really had no choice but to make the first GameCube outing a familiar affair. Rolling dice blocks, moving around the board and collecting Stars and items are the basics, which are interspersed with mini-games for coins at the end

of each turn. After the designated number of turns, the player with the most Stars wins. Simple. Or maybe not – lots of new items allow for even more devious play than before, so stealing Stars and other items from opponents is commonplace.

Mario Party 4 is really a greatest hits album with several new tracks; it takes the best bits of the last three games and throws in some new ingredients to make the definitive party game. This is all well and good, but as nice as the mini-games are, there's still a huge amount of luck governing the goings-on. You'll also need a fair bit of time on your hands to enjoy a full party game and, even then, it does drag on a bit. We found ourselves playing the individual mini-games a lot more than the full games. Titles like *Super Monkey Ball* have proved that multiplayer fun doesn't need anything to tie the games together. Provided you have enough controllers (and friends), *Mario Party 4* is the beautifully polished peak of the series – with four people playing, there's no better way to break up a couple of rounds of Monkey Target...

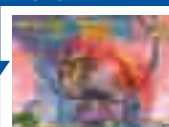
VERDICT 6/10

MULTIPLAYER FUN WITH SO-SO SOLO PLAY

MARIO PARTY 3


BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN


SUPER MONKEY BALL 2


■ The boards have been specially created to take advantage of the Mini-Mega system.



■ Some of the mini-games test your analogue stick precision – not easy, especially if you're feeling a bit, er, overwrought.



■ Star Get! Donkey Kong takes an early lead. We may have a couple of million years of evolution over our monkey brethren but it's nice to see that, in a videogame at least, they can still get one up on us. Equal opportunities and all that.



■ Collecting all the letters to reach an extra special bonus level was probably one of the banes of our turbulent childhoods. Well, that and the regular birchings from Nanny and the years at a bleak Highlands boarding school. It was cold, so cold...



■ Stick around on a level for too long and you'll get a visit from Baron Von Bubba – he's a scary ghost, you mark my words.

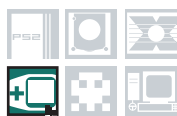


■ They might have improved the graphics, but it's nice to see that the badly-translated English remains exactly the same.

BUBBLE BOBBLE: OLD AND NEW

OLD GAME, NEW CONSOLE... BUT DOES IT REALLY WORK?

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED

Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN

Japan

PUBLISHER

Empire

DEVELOPER

MediaKite

PRICE

£24.99 (with link cable)

RELEASE

Out Now

PLAYERS

1-2

In the days long before *Rainbow Islands*, *Parasol Stars* and *Bust-A-Move*, there were only Bub and Bob – two lonely young boys who got turned into bubble-breathing dragons by the evil Super Drunk... no, really. Despite sounding totally bizarre and having one of the most simple concepts known to man, Taito's *Bubble Bobble* took arcades by storm in 1986 and soon became a cult favourite. So, with the GBA recently becoming the prime candidate for retro updates, it's no surprise that some bright spark has thought of bringing the game back for another run – and with the promise of something new, no less. Woo, and indeed, hoo.

Of course, if you're expecting anything totally revolutionary from this GBA port, you're more than likely going to be disappointed – this is old-school gaming action through and through. Going on the *Old* half alone, you'd be right in thinking it would feature an absolutely perfect port of the arcade original – every detail is here and, to be fair, that's all we'd expect.

Bubble Bobble was always a tough little nut to crack and the process of encapsulating enemies in bubbles before popping them and collecting the goodies inside isn't as easy as it

might appear – especially if you've got a hundred levels to plough through before reaching the end. When it comes to the *New* half of the title though, we might have hoped that there would be a whole slew of new levels to experience – after all, it wouldn't be hard to come up with some. Unfortunately though, Taito's licensing doesn't stretch that far – hence the reason why all MediaKite could do was enhance the graphics of the old engine. It's a shame that such changes couldn't be implemented, given that a lot of old-school ports to the GBA feature such extras. However, there's not much we (or the developers) can really do about it.

In the long run, the fact you've got to consider is that *Bubble Bobble* was, is, and always will be, an enjoyable game – this GBA port just makes it more accessible to more casual gamers. What really tips the balance in favour of this game is the inclusion of a free link cable, meaning that you can play against your mates straight out of the box; something that always appealed back in the day. This package is simple, but effective and, at the end of the day, a good game is always a good game, no matter how old it is.

VERDICT 7/10

GOOD OLD-FASHIONED FUN – JUST WHAT WE LIKE

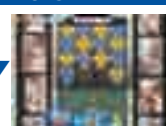
NAMCO MUSEUM



BETTER THAN



WORSE THAN



SUPER BUST-A-MOVE

games™ CONNECTED

EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY

TWIN DRAGONS: If one of your mates buys the game and links up with you via the GBA Link Cable, you can play in co-operative mode – a much easier way of getting to those insanely tricky later levels.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED

PlayStation2

ORIGIN

Japan

PUBLISHER

SEGA

DEVELOPER

SEGA Overworks

PRICE

\$49.99 (£32)

RELEASE

March '03 (TBC)
(Japan/US: Out Now)

PLAYERS

1

WILL SEGA'S UPDATE TURN OUT TO BE A CASE OF CROUCHING TIGERS, HIDDEN DRAGONS OR MISSING GAMEPLAY?

SHINOBI



Releasing updates of retro classics seems to be highly fashionable among the world's biggest game developers at the moment. First there was Capcom with *Maximo* (the pseudo follow-up to *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*), then Konami with *Contra: Shattered Soldier*, and now SEGA with *Shinobi*. And it doesn't stop there either – 2003 will see the release of Nintendo's *Metroid Prime* on GameCube and Tecmo's *Ninja Gaiden* on Xbox. Interestingly, only *Shattered Soldier* sticks closely to the 2D roots from which every one of these titles first stemmed; the others are finally making the bold move to 3D having been completely absent from retail for a number of years. Of course, the move to 3D doesn't always guarantee an increase in quality – just look at the *Street Fighter EX* games for proof of that.

Thankfully, SEGA Overworks has approached the task of converting *Shinobi* in what we consider to be the best way possible. Rather than

trying to force the core elements from 2D into 3D, the company has tackled the project as if it's something totally new. In the same way that Nintendo addressed the issue of taking the Mario universe into 3D on Nintendo 64, the full flavour and atmosphere of the *Shinobi* series has been captured here, though the gameplay and level structure has been completely reworked from scratch to be more suited to a 3D environment.

The game begins with a typical FMV movie in which the main character, Hotsuma, enters the ruined streets of post-apocalyptic Tokyo. Speech can be switched between English and Japanese in the options, though the usual dire English voice-acting means you'll probably want to stick with the latter. Also disappointing is the quality of the pre-rendered polygon modelling, which manages to be noticeably drab compared to the crisper in-game graphics. Fortunately, this and all the other questionably poor cut-scenes can be skipped at any time. And so the first level begins and, while

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY LEVELS?

Just four, but these are broken down into smaller sub areas and there are bosses on top of that.

Q. FRAME RATE?

Shinobi runs at a constant 60 frames per second throughout.

Q. AUTHENTIC SOUND?

The music is typically eighties and sounds like a mix of Giorgio Moroder and Jean Michel Jarre. This really takes us back to the days of the original arcade game.

7 BLADES



BETTER THAN



DEVIL MAY CRY



■ Upon completion of each level you're awarded a ranking based purely on your skills.



■ Destroy the enemy with a single combo then enjoy a mini-cut-scene in which they literally fall to pieces.



you'd expect to be starting off somewhere vivid and eye-catching, the first stage is surprisingly muted and unspectacular. Stone and metal skyscrapers stretch towards the night sky in the devastated city streets, the only light and colour coming from the neon signs above the empty shop doorways. Textures are simple and clean and the fact that everything is constructed with a relatively low number of polygons means that it all runs incredibly smoothly. This minimalist graphical style has also allowed the developers to display plenty of enemies on screen simultaneously, as well as keeping movement fast and fluid.

The control of Hotsuma is something that ☐ deserves special praise – especially considering the speed at which he moves and the amount of different actions on offer. Aside from the predictable single-button slash combos and double jumping, you can also cling to the surrounding walls and run along them. This technique is particularly useful in areas where entire streets have collapsed and huge, gaping chasms need to be passed. Theoretically, of course, it would be possible to stay on the walls for the entire duration of the level, so each stage has been carefully crafted to prevent such cheating from ever occurring. Firstly, Hotsuma can't cling to the loose rock faces that are dotted liberally throughout to make things a little more tricky. But the more traditional element that restricts the speed of progress is the way that every enemy in each sub-area must be destroyed before the next section becomes available. This can be compared to the 'go' arrows that would appear in scrolling beat-'em-ups years ago. Of course, all these gameplay elements would be pointless if the combat was

poorly implemented, but once again the developers have come up trumps. The nearest enemy can be locked-onto by holding R1 then destroyed by slashing with the square button. This causes your sword to glow for a short time, during which any subsequent attacks will be added onto the combo. You can also throw Shurikens at enemies to stun them, and zip around them at high-speed to avoid attacks.

When all's said and done though, it isn't long ☐ before what's on offer starts to become a little repetitive; later levels may offer more in the way of visual variation, but the gameplay never really evolves in any way at all. Still, the *Shinobi* series started life as an arcade action game and that's exactly what SEGA Overworks has provided us with here. The developers haven't been tempted to include stealth or RPG elements to beef it up – there's *Tenchu* or *Way Of The Samurai* if that's what you want. Instead, *Shinobi* is a fast-paced action game quite unlike any other currently available and, while it may be short-lived, it's great fun while it lasts.



■ There are three types of Ninjutsu here, the most effective is Ka'en.



■ Using the walls is pivotal to progressing. Hotsuma can simply run along them to avoid holes in the floor.

■ Packs of ankle-biting wild dogs are disposed of in a single blast if you've located any magic spells.



SWORDS AND SORCERY

A little way into the game, Hotsuma learns of the curse on Akujiki, his Oboro Clan sword. Sorcery has given Akujiki a life of its own and now it feeds on the souls of its victims in order to survive. Each time an enemy is destroyed, its soul is converted into Yin, a small red orb that represents the life that once was. Akujiki automatically absorbs this power, sucking it directly from the corpses, glowing with rage as it does so. However, failing to feed Akujiki results in the sword absorbing Yin directly from its wielder, saving itself but putting an end to the life of its user. Until that inevitable time, the user has no choice but to end enough lives to keep Akujiki, and indeed their own body, alive.

VERDICT 6/10

SIMPLISTIC AND REPETITIVE, BUT STILL QUITE FUN



■ Although the imagery is a little crude, it's undoubtedly artistic.



■ Come on, it's a Lily – a flower, for goodness sake. You don't need weapons, just a bit of weedkiller or maybe a spade.



ONE ONLINE STEP FOR NINTENDO, ONE GIANT DISAPPOINTMENT FOR GAMING KIND

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE: EPISODE I & II

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED

GameCube

ORIGIN

Japan

PUBLISHER

SEGA

DEVELOPER

Sonic Team

PRICE

£39.99 (game), £59.99 (game and modem)

RELEASE

Q1 '03 (Japan/US: Out Now)

PLAYERS

1-4

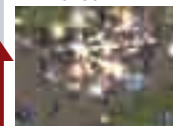
Ahh, Nintendo – ever wary of dipping its toe in the pool of online gaming. Not that you can blame it for taking things easy; certainly from a console point of view, the pool's quite chilly at the moment and pretty much devoid of anything remotely playable. Still, with Xbox Live just around the corner and even PlayStation2 set to leap online quite soon, the GameCube can't afford to hesitate for long. Which is probably why SEGA has decided to make the step on Nintendo's behalf and come up with a port of its most popular online title to date, *Phantasy Star Online*. However, we've got a distinct feeling that expectant gamers may be left rather unsatisfied.

The main thing that should be pointed out if you're new to *PSO* is that, as single-player experiences go, it's rather weak – if you're expecting an epic RPG, you'll be disappointed. Obviously, it adheres to a few of the basic role-playing rules but as far as the plot goes (which is pretty integral to any RPG), it's a bit thin on the ground. Basically, you're a Hunter – you're employed to go down to the surface of this new planet to investigate an explosion and, well, that's it. If you want a more accurate description, think of it as 'RPG Lite' – a healthy alternative to the more meaty RPG titles.

On top of that, lone players will find that the gameplay is somewhat lacking in the variety department. Anyone who's familiar with the slightly monotonous pace of the *Diablo* series on the PC will recognise *Phantasy Star Online's* rather simple premise, mainly because it's an almost identical one. Teleport onto a planet (be it the Forest, Caves, Mines or another remarkably similar location) and kill all the monsters nearby to unlock the door into the next clearing – now kill all the monsters here to unlock the next door, and the next, and the... you get the picture. Then there's collecting items – by picking up everything you come across, you might just find something better than what you've got. Or maybe not. It's a case of collecting everything and having to check it against all the items you've already got – not exactly fun after the millionth time you have to do it.

Primarily, *PSO* isn't a single-player game – heck, it isn't really even a split-screen multiplayer game, even though Sonic Team has obviously done its best to make it work. No, the focus of the game (as the name so obviously suggests) is the online mode. With the Japanese

MYTH OF SOMA



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



DIABLO II



■ While *PSO* might be an RPG in name, talking to people only gleans pointless information that you won't actually need.

and Americans taking to the *Phantasy Star* servers like flies to manure (in that there's loads of them on there, not that the game is comparable to horse crap) there's no doubt that people up and down the country will be forming new alliances and stealing items when no-one's looking. Yes, playing with people online does hold some kind of elusive enjoyment: the fact that there's actually someone there besides the rather feeble AI to kill, talk to (in rather short and abrupt sentences) and share the experience does up the ante somewhat – hey, that's the whole appeal of online gaming. Not surprisingly though, the rather monotonous and shallow gameplay remains unchanged and, as such, newcomers might not be able to see the appeal quite so easily.

Of course, the gameplay problems were ☐ inherent in the original Dreamcast version so can't be pinned squarely on the GameCube port. However, the fact that the updated version still features the disturbing pop-up of the original is rather worrying. It's odd that while some elements have been improved, something as obvious as this has been left untouched. Play it in multiplayer mode though and things get worse; entire sections of landscape appear out of thin air which, combined with the tiny screen area for each player, don't really do much for the atmosphere. While a graphical leap of epic proportions isn't exactly what we were expecting, we're more than a bit shocked – this shouldn't be happening on the GameCube at all.

FAQs

Q. NEW LEVELS?

Episode II is a totally new set of randomly generated areas – but to do well in them, you need to have finished *Episode I* first. Done it already on the Dreamcast? Tough.

Q. EXTRA CHARACTERS?

There are three new character classes – Female Android Hunter, Female Human Ranger and Male Human Force – with which to create your own Ranger.

Q. PAY TO PLAY?

'Fraid so. Gamers wanting to go online will have to stump up a monthly fee before they can get the most out of the game.



COME TOGETHER

The blatant gameplay problems with *PSO* are most obvious when you play the game solo – because you're on your own, the atmosphere is a bit flat. But do things get better when you add your mates? Well, almost. Clearly, *PSO* is supposed to be played with other people, although whether they were all meant to play on the same console is debatable. While it's obviously good that team mates can actually talk to each other, the split-screen makes for a rather minimal viewing experience and means it's often hard to see what's going on. Everything's been cut down to make it fit, from the individual menus to the removal of the on-screen map that showed which direction the enemies were coming from. Understandable, but not ideal.

GLOBAL TAKING GAMING ONLINE

BABY STEPS: Although it's surprising to see a game made by a third-party taking the lead for a console's online plans, *PSO's* reputation precedes it. Because of this, there's no doubt it'll sell regardless.



■ Short on energy? Need to store your cash? As long as you've got a Telepipe handy, you can return to the ship at any time.

When it comes down to it, the question of ☐ whether you should rush out and get *Phantasy Star Online* isn't an easy one to answer. Obviously it's the GameCube's first online game, which means it'll sell like hot cakes, but it's not exactly the most engrossing game on the planet. It's one of those games that, at times, feels like a chore to play. Practically every puzzle is the same (which takes a lot of the fun out of the game) and just when you think you've improved your levels enough to take on the bigger and better monsters, you'll discover that anything in the next area can batter you into the ground. It's like the learning curve has been ironed out and this can get infuriating. It's a shame really because as concepts go, *Phantasy Star Online* is a very nice one. If only there was actually some proper content behind all the showy loveliness, it might have been easier to get a bit more excited about it.



■ You're less than a metre from the enemy with a sword bigger than your arm... and yet you still miss. Could this game be any more annoying?

VERDICT 5/10
BOG-STANDARD ONLINE HACK 'N' SLASH... YAWN



DETAILS

PS2

FORMAT REVIEWED
Playstation2

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER
Maxis

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

THE SIMS

ANYONE EVER TELL YOU TO GET A LIFE? NOW'S YOUR CHANCE...

Ten years ago, you would have been laughed off the face of the Earth if you'd said that one of the best-selling franchises of the future would entail getting a job, making friends, reading books and going to the toilet. In fact, even we would have probably been sceptical at the time... still so today perhaps if *The Sims* on the PC hadn't been done so well. Things did start to go wrong after the first game, though; numerous expansion packs hit the shelves and punters are still expected to shell out twenty notes a time for features that should really have been in the original game. And with an interface ideally suited to a mouse and keyboard, we've always wondered how the game would translate to a console controller. With the massive user-base of Sony's console, EA and Maxis were never going to miss the chance to bring *The Sims* to an even wider audience, so just how different are the console and PC games?

First things first; the interface. Even without the mouse, the point-and-click gameplay works fairly well. Controlling a vertical beam of light, you're free to select items and people at any

height – should you select an area where there are several items (accidentally or otherwise), an easily navigated menu is all that stands between you and your goal. This system is as practical as possible, but it can still make it fairly troublesome to get to places in a hurry. You still have some control over time as well – pausing time and speeding it up are only a shoulder button away. Unfortunately, the enhanced speeds are notably slower than those possible in the PC game, which means you'll spend a lot more time than we'd like twiddling your thumbs and watching your Sims sleep.

If that weren't enough, the range of buyable items is initially restricted by a lot of furniture and accessories being locked. These have to be opened up via the new 'Get A Life' mode that single-handedly destroys the very purpose of *The Sims* with one fundamental flaw – objectives. After making your own alter-ego, you're dropped into numerous pre-made buildings and given a number of goals to reach in order to progress to the next 'level'. Early levels only give you control of a single character so you'll have to do even

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

MR POPULAR: As more people visit your home, you'll get to forge friendships and make enemies.

INTERACTIVITY: Swim in your pool, watch TV, read, feed the fish... there's always something to do.

■ Living vicariously through your Sims? Why not? It's not like you've got a real hot tub, is it?



CREATURES

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

THE SIMS (PC)



■ The freedom of Create-A-Sim mode is a welcome addition – customize your freaks as you see fit.



■ All your Sims have delightfully bijou pads. Not sure about the interior design, but, y'know, what's wrong with lashings of brown paint?

more waiting than usual. Even when you do start to increase your number of playable characters, it's still only the starting guy or girl that merits any attention since you'll move in with new Sims once all your objectives are met. If it weren't for the fact that this mode is the only way to unlock many of the game's more interesting items, it probably wouldn't even warrant a second look. Without total freedom, *The Sims* just isn't the same.

Compared to other PC-to-PS2 ports, *The Sims* is a much more respectable effort than shoddy efforts such as *Half-Life* or *Soldier Of Fortune*. It's clear that work has gone into distancing the console version from the PC original but this may have changed the structure a little too much for its own good. The absence of many of the household objects (until you unlock them, at least) and the lack of the downloadable extras that kept the PC version from getting stale means there's not really enough here to hold our interest for long. If nothing else, we'd have liked to have seen a lot more of the items from the PC expansion packs added to the console game – several of these (such as the electric guitar) are available but, coming so long after the first PC title, this should have a lot more than it does. Perhaps holding *The Sims* back until Sony's online strategy is in full



■ Just be thankful for that fire alarm – if it weren't for that, you'd probably be short of one kitchen and one Sim by now...

swing would have been a better option – it's amazing the longevity that a few extra items bring to the game. Given the series's history, we wouldn't be surprised to see Maxis pioneer the PS2 expansion disc...

If you've ever sampled the original PC version of the game, we all but guarantee you'll be disappointed with the console conversion. While not nearly as bad as it could have been, a little too much effort has been put into making this a significantly different game. The PC version had the balance of everything just right and this is almost entirely lost in the translation. It's not that we fear change – it's more that we can see when something has changed for the worse. Fair play to all involved – porting *The Sims* to the PS2 was a monumental task and, for what it's worth, it hasn't been done badly at all. With such a reputation to live up to, it's hard to imagine the console version ever truly re-creating the experience. Newcomers to *The Sims* probably won't even notice half the things we've picked up on, but there's no denying that this game should have been closer to its PC namesake.

VERDICT 5/10
A DISAPPOINTING TRANSLATION OF A GREAT GAME



DOUBLE LIFE

The only real improvement over the original PC game is the enhancement to Sim creation itself. Where the home computer version offered a selection of pre-made parts for assembling a family Lego-style, the PlayStation2 version gives the player much more control over the appearance of their created characters. There is marginally more freedom with the clothing and body parts but the head is where most extra effort has gone. Far from just bolting on a prefabricated face as before, you get to choose from an (admittedly restricted) selection of faces that can be augmented with accessories, hairstyles and other alterations. While we appreciate such extras, the sheer fact that this is a console game eliminates one of the best features of the PC game – downloadable extras. With so many extra skins and items available on the Net, the PC game has near-infinite character possibilities – something sadly lacking from the PS2 incarnation.



■ Hey, everybody's got to start somewhere, right? You'll be entertaining thousands in no time...



■ Work your Sims too hard and they'll get depressed. They won't hit the bottle though, which keeps costs down...

THE ONLY RACING SIMULATION WITH A FULL-ON IDENTITY CRISIS

AUTO MODELLISTA

DETAILS	
	PlayStation2
	FORMAT REVIEWED
	ORIGIN
	PUBLISHER
	DEVELOPER
	PRICE
	RELEASE
	PLAYERS

Cel-shading seems to be the big thing for games developers at the moment, if only because it can make even the dullest game look

great. Take *Auto Modellista*, for instance – Capcom's attempt to create a racing game with flair. By using stylish cel-shaded graphics to render real-life cars and tracks, the game manages to look incredibly polished and, for want of a better word, fun. But while it all looks very snazzy, *Auto Modellista* sadly suffers from a split personality; it just can't decide what it wants to be.

Is it an arcade speed-fest like *Ridge Racer*? The graphics certainly give the impression that it is, but the realistic physics and handling mean that it doesn't feel like one when you get into the actual races. So that means it's a driving simulator like *Gran Turismo 3*? Well, yes... and no. The main bulk of the game comes from the Garage Life mode, which does its best to mimic the in-depth simulation experience. However, all it amounts to is a meagre slice compared to the whole gâteau that is *GT3* (mmm, gâteau). Yes, you can tune up your car and pick which races you enter, but rather than drawing you in and giving you complete control over every tiny detail, the whole thing feels shallow and nowhere near as absorbing as it should be. Maybe we're in the minority about this, but things as complex and

detailed as driving sims need to be done as thoroughly as possible (as with *GT3*) or not at all – half-arsed efforts just end up boring the arcade gamers and frustrating the realism fanatics.



The icing on the rather bitter-tasting cake is that the game's biggest selling-point has been ripped out for the PAL release – there's no online option. Rather than being able to play online straight out of the box, Capcom are planning to release an updated version (as well as the actual sequel) later in the year. Certainly, this isn't all Capcom's fault as Sony's European strategy doesn't kick in until March, but the fact that this release of the game isn't prepared for the launch is downright negligent. Considering this is from Capcom – a company known for its high standards – *Auto Modellista* is a surprising disappointment. It looks great, but some dodgy slowdown and a complete lack of involvement leaves us with a slightly sour taste in our mouths.

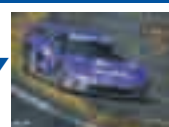
■ The more you race, the fancier your garage. Keep it tidy mind, or you'll lose your WD-40.

DRIVING EMOTION
TYPE-S



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



GRAN TURISMO 3:
A-SPEC

games™
FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
ARTISTOON: All the cars in the game are genuine models, despite being drawn in a cel-shaded style.
CUSTOMISED: Not only can you choose how your car looks, you can decorate your garage too.



■ These rain effects look lovely in all their cel-shaded glory, but they also slow you down something chronic.



■ Like the cars, many of the tracks in *Auto Modellista* are genuine. Here, we're off for a quick sprint around Suzuka.

games™

FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
GALVATRON: The transforming main vehicle is easily the best part of the game.
BRANCHING: The missions you get as the game continues depend on previous performances.



■ If nothing else, never let it be said that not much happens in *Battle Engine Aquila*...



■ Some of the landscapes are a lot prettier than others – this snowy location is among the finest.



■ Not a boss as such, but this monstrous mech is the focal point of one of the later missions. Which does make you wonder what the actual boss will look like. You know, cowardice isn't such a bad thing. Can we turn back now?

BATTLE ENGINE AQUILA

TAKING THE NAME OF ROBOTS IN DISGUISE IN VAIN? OPTIMUS PRIME WOULD BE TURNING IN HIS GRAVE...

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED

Xbox

ORIGIN

US

PUBLISHER

Infogrames

DEVELOPER

Lost Toys

PRICE

£39.99

RELEASE

Out Now

PLAYERS

1-2

Ever since *Transformers* hit our screens way back in the day, it's been cool to be a big robot with the ability to change shape. Loads of games have featured such ideas but precious few have based their main vehicles upon it, which is just what *Battle Engine Aquila* does. Dropped in at the deep end, Hawk Aquila finds himself in the unenviable position of having the fate of a nation on his shoulders. He is forced to take the controls of the Battle Engine, a super-powerful prototype vehicle capable of land and air travel and packed with deadly weapons. So what can Lost Toys offer us with this that other games have lacked? Actually, nothing at all...

Lets get the best bits out of the way first. The mission branching system is very nice – sure, it doesn't come close to the likes of *Colony Wars*'s evolving missions but it's a decent effort nonetheless. The game is also pretty simple to control, although you'll probably find that you want to spend most of your time in the sky, as it's so much quicker than land travel. So with the good bits accounted for, it's all downhill from here. *Battle Engine* is not an awful game; blasting away at hundreds of enemies is fun for a while,

but herein lies the game's main flaw – it's unbelievably repetitive. There are only so many tasks you can actually perform, so it's not long before you grow tired of shooting down bombers or defending convoys. Visually, the Xbox version is by far the strongest, throwing around the extra effects and animations sadly lacking from the PS2 version; the frame rate is also more stable on the Microsoft machine but is still far from perfect.

As a simple and fairly enjoyable bout of short-term stress release, *Aquila* is as good as they come. The problem for us is that from any other viewpoint, *Battle Engine* falls short. Sure, there's plenty to unlock and the grading system adds some degree of replay value, as does the multiplayer mode (Versus and Co-op are available – the latter is another praiseworthy inclusion) but it's ultimately a very shallow experience. If you're in desperate need of a shooting fix and are done with (or can't be doing with) *TimeSplitters 2*, *Battle Engine Aquila* might just be worth a look. But only just.



VERDICT 5/10

SOME NICE IDEAS CAN'T SAVE THIS REPETITIVE SHOOTER

PS2 £39.99



The biggest difference is the graphics – the PS2 version looks scrappy next to Xbox's crisp textures. And we reckon the Xbox controller is better suited to the game.

INCOMING



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



PHANTOM CRASH



■ *Ikaruga* features some of the biggest explosions ever seen in a videogame. Which can only be a good thing.



■ Quick! The big enemy is approaching! Put the best china away and make sure the cat's indoors.



AS CRAZY AS IT MAY SOUND, BLACK AND WHITE HAS NEVER SEEMED SO COLOURFUL...

IKARUGA

DETAILS

PS2	GameCube
GameCube	
Format	GameCube
Origin	Japan
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Treasure
Price	£39.99 (Import)
Release	Out Now
Players	1-2

Treasure has had quite a bumpy time of it these past few years – after producing some of the most glorious titles of the 16- and 32-bit eras, many saw Saturn shooter *Radiant Silvergun* as the beginning of the end for the quirky Japanese developer. Sub-standard titles like *Freak Out* certainly did nothing to help Treasure's cause and it wasn't until late last year that its reputation was saved by an obscure Japanese vertical shooter by the name of *Ikaruga*. Going back to what it did best, Treasure managed to create a game that encompassed breathtaking visuals, ingenious gameplay and, above all, a level of simplicity and playability to rival even *Pong*. Now that game has come home to Nintendo's latest machine and with Treasure offering GameCube gamers both *Wario World* and *Ikaruga*, it looks as if the outcast developer has found a new home. Unfortunately, it looks unlikely that we'll actually see this gem on these shores; there are currently no plans for an official US or European release.

The premise is simple; your ship can either be ☐ black or white, changeable at the touch of a button. Enemies share the same colouration options and fire off bullets of their colour – these must be avoided or, if your ship is currently the same colour, absorbed. The twist is that enemies take double damage from the opposite colour, but this is a risky business. Put into context, say you happen upon a huge white enemy – by staying white, you'll take no damage from its projectiles

games™ FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
REVIVAL: Here's the proof that the scrolling shooter isn't dead, it's just been taking a well-earned rest.
SIMPLE THINGS: Treasure has managed to make the most basic idea into an absolute masterpiece.

and inflict minor damage, but turn black and you'll be dodging like the best of them for the rest of your foe's short lifespan. It's this that really sets *Ikaruga* apart from the competition. After so many weapons bonanzas and slowdown-riddled extravaganzas, Treasure really has stripped the formula down to the bare bones and with remarkable success.

Having been built as a visually impressive game, ☐ the transfer to more powerful hardware has not been difficult. As a result, *Ikaruga* looks like a top-notch Dreamcast game, but then again there aren't that many GameCube games that couldn't be accused of this. Still very pretty, *Ikaruga* certainly looks and sounds the part – it's amazing that such varied enemies and environments have been designed around the basic colour scheme. It's not all button-mashing blasting either, as this is one of the few shooters where you actually have to use your head. Switching colours and diving through laser gates, carving paths through coloured blocks, working out how to defeat the massive bosses... all are welcome diversions from the trigger-happy shooters we've grown used to. You also have to pay attention to your Special meter – as you absorb the correct colour bullets, the bar will build until you can unleash a special multiple homing shot which only increases the thinking elements. You won't be just dodging shots after a few hours with this little beauty...

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY STAGES?

Five stages may not sound much, but they don't come much more challenging than this.

Q. WHAT WEAPONS?

Just the two starters but each can be either black or white – simplicity is very much order of the day.

Q. EXTRA FEATURES?

Several galleries are unlocked after a specific amount of playing time is accumulated or certain tasks are completed.

SILPHEED: THE LOST PLANET



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



CASTLE OF SHIKIGAMI



■ Strap me down and call me Susan if that isn't the largest, most impressive boss in the world. Ever.



I'VE GOT YOUR BACK

It's not until you begin to play two-player mode that you realise just how incredible *Ikaruga* really is. Entirely different tactics are required during co-operative play; one player can take the colour of the enemies and stay forward absorbing shots while the second hides behind them, spraying streams of the opposite colour. This strategy is particularly effective on the massive bosses who are only really damaged by the opposite colour (always more difficult to use in single player mode).

Of course, the 'every man for himself' approach still works too, but teamwork is more likely to prolong your lifespan. *Ikaruga* has the gift of a multiplayer mode that is just as appealing as solo play.



□ In terms of play modes, the menu is just as simple as the gameplay. No translation is required to get into Normal and Prototype modes; the former is the main game while Prototype allows new players to get to grips with the game by offering the first couple of sections on Free Play. When it comes to the main game, we've never seen such variety between three difficulty settings. It's almost like three separate modes rather than skill levels, but of course some are far harder than others. In Easy mode, defeated enemies disappear without a trace, but step it up a notch and it gets a bit more interesting. Normal enemies release a volley of self-coloured shots when defeated by the same colour, while on Hard mode all enemies erupt in a burst of projectiles however they are defeated. On top of that, killing three opponents of the same colour in quick succession builds up Chains – these are the only way to hit big points and get those much-needed 1-Ups.

□ *Ikaruga's* appeal in today's market must be somewhat limited – a casual gamer would probably be put off by the lack of extra guns, modes and levels, leaving the game to just the hard-core importers. Even then, the sheer difficulty of it is enough to scare off even a hardened shooter nut. This is a shame, as *Ikaruga* is the most obvious test of pure skill we've seen in a videogame for years. Incredibly tough and as addictive as any console game, we're just glad we never happened upon the coin-op machine – the amount of coins that we'd have pumped in would have been enough to buy our own arcade complete with swimming pool and helipad. After wave after wave of third rate shooters trying to go one bigger and better than their rivals, *Ikaruga* takes the vertical shooter formula back to its roots. In doing so, Treasure has added its own unique twist and proved beyond all doubt that less is certainly more.



■ Black or white? Sometimes it's hard to decide but indecision will be the death of you, as our mothers used to say.



■ The action is relentless, particularly when you reach later levels. And is that purple rain? But it probably wasn't what Prince was on about.



VERDICT 8/10

THE VERTICAL SHOOTER RISES FROM THE GRAVE IN STYLE



■ Catching one of the apes results in this showy pyrotechnic bonanza.



■ Creeping up on the apes is all well and good until they spot you.



■ Look out for the long-lost brother of Fred the Homepride sauce man...

APE ESCAPE 2

AND YOU THOUGHT ONLY NINTENDO COULD MAKE CATCHING SMALL CREATURES FUN...



DETAILS	
	PlayStation2
	Japan
	SCEE
	In-House
	£39.99
	Out Now
	1-2

Monkeys, apes, primates... whatever. The simple truth is that everyone loves monkeys. Don't pretend you don't, it's as clear as day that if you put a monkey in a game, it'll sell. But now we come to a dilemma. In a game such as this with so many cheeky chimps running around, are we to experience monkey Nirvana or could it be a case of too much of a good thing? Thankfully, *Ape Escape 2* is more like the former; Sony's simian sequel takes the innovations of its predecessor and expands them into what is easily one of the better platformers on the PlayStation2. Following the monkey mind-control events of the first game, *Ape Escape 2* starts with the nightmare beginning anew; head honcho Specter returns with countless cheeky monkeys to do his evil bidding. With your trusty Gotcha Net in hand, you must guide Hikaru around the world to recapture the naughty apes.

As before, there are stacks of gadgets to aid you on your travels, ranging from the Water Pistol (for putting out fires or spinning waterwheels) to old favourites such as the RC Car for chasing chimps out of tight spaces. More noticeably, the apes themselves are a lot more varied and themed according to the level – you'll have matador monkeys taunting you in the Spanish level and kung-fu apes doing their thing

in the Ninja Temple. Other more nondescript primates all have different personalities as well – pretending to be trees, hiding in small holes and running like cowards to avoid your net. The Dual Stick control is as good as ever – it's perhaps a little loose for some, but it's certainly not a difficult game to play.

Our main complaint with *Ape Escape 2* is that it can get a little repetitive and frustrating in places. Despite beautifully varied locales, ingenious gadgets and some great comedy moments, there's still no variety in your actual tasks. Don't get us wrong, that doesn't make it bad. In fact, if you haven't tired of the action after the first few levels, you'll more than likely play and thoroughly enjoy the rest of the game. With several mini-games (including a *Dance Dance Revolution*-inspired affair), the Gotcha Box (a lottery of the game's secrets), Time Attack and other rewards for multiple completions, you can't accuse *Ape Escape 2* of being malnourished – getting everything will take you weeks. The cutesy visuals are very much representative of the game itself – while it won't appeal to everyone, it's still a pure and uncomplicated joy.

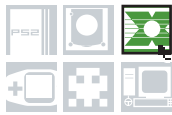


VERDICT 7/10
GREAT FUN, BUT NEEDS MORE VARIETY

AFTER MORE THAN TEN YEARS, TOEJAM AND EARL HAVE RETURNED, FUNKY AS EVER

TOEJAM & EARL III: MISSION TO EARTH

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED

Xbox

ORIGIN

US

PUBLISHER

SEGA

DEVELOPER

ToeJam & Earl Productions

PRICE

\$49.99 (£32)

RELEASE

2003 TBC (Japan:
TBA, US: Out Now)

PLAYERS

1-2

Despite only ever receiving average reviews, the original *ToeJam & Earl* built up a substantial cult following when it was released on the

MegaDrive in 1991. Two funky aliens searching abstract worlds for pieces of their spaceship was a novel idea, but was only ever going to appeal to a few gamers. Of course, the title was never aimed at the mass-market and neither is this sequel. Unfortunately, things have moved on over the past 10 years and, while *ToeJam & Earl III* certainly achieves what it sets out to do, it feels a little dated compared to the other adventure games on offer today.

The first thing you notice about the new instalment in this series is just how great the characterisations are. The game starts with an FMV sequence of the two stars recording a home movie about their forthcoming adventure, during which they introduce newcomer Latisha. The witty language and hip-hop influences give the game a flavour quite unlike anything else. Sadly, the technical side of this introduction is all over the place – polygon counts are low and the visual clarity leaves a lot to be desired. The introduction is, of course, only a tiny portion of the game and,

aside from one or two other minor niggles, the rest of what's on offer is much more accomplished. The main crux of the gameplay is to collect the 12 Sacred Albums Of Funk, which have been stolen from the planet Funkotron and scattered around a strangely eccentric representation of Earth. Even stranger are the violent human inhabitants that dwell there – little girls who ask to see your wallet, cheerleaders that shake their pompoms at you and Santa Funk, who's always talking about his three hoes. It's all very gimmicky, as are the myriad power-ups hidden around the levels.

Unfortunately, gimmicks can only last so long, and once you've had a laugh at the witty speech, tried out a few of the power-ups and listened to the Soul Sisters singing about funk a few dozen times, it all starts to drag. If you're a fan of the original Mega Drive games, or you're looking for a little light refreshment, then you'll probably love *TJ&EIII*. But if you're looking for depth, variation and ingenuity, then look elsewhere because you won't find it here.

VERDICT 5/10

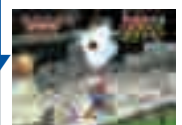
CERTAINLY VERY FUNNY, BUT NOT TO EVERYONE'S TASTE

TY THE TASMANIAN
TIGER



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



BLINX: THE TIME
SWEEPER



Wander off in different directions in the two-player mode and the screen splits horizontally to give you a better view of the action.



TJ&EIII is one of the first games to support Xbox Live. Find this muscleman and download extra levels free of charge.



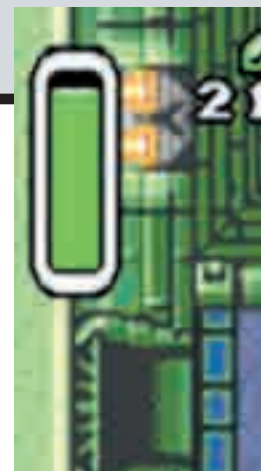
Just like the original games, *TJ&EIII* includes a selection of comedy power-ups – use these spring shoes to boing your way into secret areas. And be prepared to find a lot of things with the word 'funk' in their title. Those of a non-disco persuasion may not be impressed.

games™

GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

IT STARTS: *ToeJam & Earl III* is the first of many Xbox games to offer downloadable levels via Xbox Live. A comedy muscleman walks around the hub areas advertising the feature on a sandwich board.



Beating up statues is a sure-fire way to blunten that sword of yours. Not wise.

THE BEST ZELDA GAME MADE PORTABLE AND MULTIPLAYER? PINCH US...

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A

DETAILS	
FORMAT REVIEWED	
Game Boy Advance	
ORIGIN	
Japan	
PUBLISHER	
Nintendo	
DEVELOPER	
In-House	
PRICE	
£29.99	
RELEASE	
Out Now	
PLAYERS	
1-4	

Stop the press! You can now play old Super Nintendo games on your Game Boy Advance... what do you mean? This is old news?

Curses, you'll be telling us you know that GameCube *Zelda's* gone all cel-shaded next.

Yes, Link's seminal adventure is available in a more portable form than ever before. Chances are, most of you are familiar with this classic already – it's widely regarded as Link's finest hour and even today it's crystal clear why it has such a following. For the uninitiated among you, *A Link To The Past* puts you in the shoes of a young Link. Following the epic and twisted story of his struggle to defeat a tyrannical wizard, the journey spans numerous dungeons and trials with an incredible range of equipment on offer to aid your quest. As one of the finest games available on the Super Nintendo more than ten years ago, is Link's ageing adventure as fresh today as his Game Boy-exclusive outings?

The first hurdle we had to clear was probably the biggest – were we enjoying the game for what it was, or were we enjoying it out of sheer

nostalgia? Suffice to say, it didn't take long for us to be reminded that *A Link To The Past* is, was, and continues to be, a remarkable game. With there being very little difference between the graphical power of the SNES and the GBA, the game has been perfectly translated across to the handheld. While these visuals are every bit as good as they ever were, we were shocked by the sound quality – in a good way, of course. This is the one area of the game that has been upgraded. On top of all the original sound clips, samples from *Ocarina Of Time* have been used to make Link scream and shout as he swings his sword, falls down holes and generally does his adventuring thing.

The playability is every bit as good as we remember. If anything, the different button layout is not quite as functional as its SNES counterpart but there's very little in it. Apart from sound updates and a few slight text and gameplay tweaks, there have been few notable changes to the main game – the only obvious updates are the multiplayer-only *Four Swords* adventure and an extra dungeon (although you need to finish the multiplayer quest to access it). *Four Swords* sees





■ As before, throwing pottery is a fine way of despatching some less important adversaries.

EXTRA LINKAGE

A *Link To The Past* isn't the straight port people expected when it was first revealed. Aside from the *Four Swords* multiplayer quest, a whole new dungeon has been added to the main game. This only opens once you've finished both the normal quest and the multiplayer adventure, but once you've done so you'll find a whole host of obstacles in what is arguably the hardest dungeon in the game. There are also some little changes – Link has a few extra sound effects, some of the text has been slightly modified, arrows can now break pots and the Lantern (the only item you have at the start of the game) can now do damage to enemies. Link's not as defenceless as he used to be...



games™

CONNECTED

EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY

FOUR SWORDS: This new game mode allows up to four players to go adventuring thanks to the GBA's link-up capabilities. Players must work together to conquer tough enemies and puzzles.

LINK TO THE PAST

up to four players teaming up on a dungeoneering quest where co-operation is essential for success. While this sounds like an incredible concept (and, to some extent, it is), the lifespan is something of a letdown – four wholly enjoyable but fairly small mini-quests. Sure, with four Links tearing up a dungeon it really makes for a beautiful experience but when was the last time you played four-player GBA link-up? That's pretty much what we thought.

Our main gripe is an obvious one but it's still of some concern. We've already finished this game several times (no, not on the Game Boy). Having completed the SNES version, can we really justify forking out thirty English pounds to play through it again? When you consider that you could probably pick up both a SNES and a copy of the original for less than the price of the GBA game, it really does make you stop and think before parting with your cash. On one hand, *A Link To The Past* is still a great game and those who haven't had the opportunity to play it to completion can now do so on the move. On the other, anyone aside from *Zelda* fanatics and newcomers probably won't see this as a sound investment, despite the

new features. As good as the game may be, it's still an old Super Nintendo title at heart and should be treated as such.

Is it so wrong for us to want all-new *Mario* and *Zelda* titles for the GBA? We're aware that Nintendo has its hands full with its key GameCube titles but we're growing tired of the ports. *Mario Advance 4* looks set to be worse still – a £30 port of a NES game, however good, is shocking. If the next titles in these popular series aren't original games, we fear for the state of the GBA market. There's not nearly enough new material on show and, worse still, much of the fresh stuff is not up to scratch. This handheld really needs strong new titles if it is to continue to sell; the likes of *Pokémon* and *Golden Sun 2* will no doubt do the business but there's no question that a new *Zelda* or *Mario* title would shift hardware in unbelievable numbers. That's not to say that this won't sell – we're all too aware that avid fans will lap it up for multiplayer alone, but as nice as it may be, this feature just strikes us as being a cunning way of selling more copies of a ten-year-old game that should have been an all-new adventure.



■ Chickens seem to be a recurring theme in *Zelda* games. Poultry fans will be overjoyed to hear that they're still present.



■ One of several mini-games, this chest-guessing diversion can make or break you in minutes.

VERDICT 8/10

ANOTHER SNES PORT, BUT HARD TO CRITICISE OTHERWISE

games™ **FINGERPRINT**

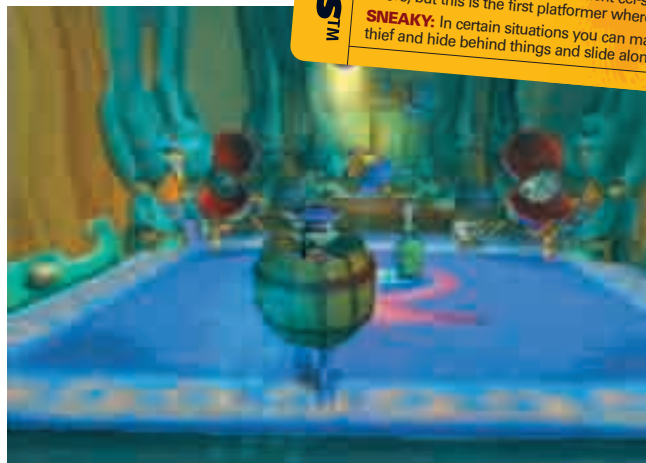
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

CEL-SHADED: We've seen excellent cel-shading before, but this is the first platformer where it works.

SNEAKY: In certain situations you can make like a thief and hide behind things and slide along ledges.



■ A super-sneaky master thief move in operation. Staying out of sight is the key to getting through each level safely.



■ Ingeniously, this wooden barrel is a shield against dart guns. Stylish and practical.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED

PlayStation2

ORIGIN

US

PUBLISHER

SCEE

DEVELOPER

Sucker Punch

PRICE

£39.99

RELEASE

Out Now

PLAYERS

1

SLY COOPER AND THE THIEVIUS RACCOONUS

FLEA-RIDDEN RODENTS HAVE NEVER LOOKED SO PUR-DEE

Seeing as how originality in videogames is pretty much dead and buried (hey, it's a fact – don't shoot the messenger), it's not exactly shocking to see developers mixing genres in order to come up with something new. We can see the executive meeting now; a group of impeccably-suited gentlemen, sitting around a large oak table pulling genres out of a hat. Adventure plus... sports! Been there, done that with *Dark Summit*. Shoot-'em-up mixed with... RPG! Thank you, *Phantom Crash*. But combining Action, Platform and Stealth all at once? Nah... that'll never work.

Actually, it does – especially when served with a decent dose of the games industry's flavour of the month, cel-shaded graphics. Considering that the Platform/Adventure genre has come on leaps and bounds in recent years (mostly with the help of titles like *Ratchet And Clank*), *Sly Cooper* is one of the most fantastic-looking and well-acted games of its kind. Naturally, the plot only serves to set up the action – a family of thieves has their prized book stolen by an evil gang, so you've got to recover its pages from a selection of safes – but in having the star as a cartoon-styled master thief (and a raccoon at that), Sony has paved the way for all manner of stylish set-pieces and spoofs – the obvious mickey-taking of *Metal Gear Solid's* Codex sections, the super-sneaky master thief moves, the impressive voice-acting in each cut-scene... combined with the extremely fluid cel-shaded animation, they all work a treat and create a fairly enjoyable experience.

But while it certainly looks like the best platformer around, *Sly Cooper* does suffer some problems, mainly because, like Sony's last attempt at creating a platform mascot with *Crash Bandicoot*, the game is rather linear. Yes, there are opportunities to take a slight detour when it comes to collecting clue bottles but, generally, you're only going in one direction. The replay value of trying to open every safe might be enough to bring you back a couple of times, but the game beneath is a little basic compared to the flashy visuals on top. *Sly Cooper* certainly looks the business, but, in the end, the graphics write cheques that the gameplay can't cash.

VERDICT 6/10

GORGEOUS TO WATCH, BUT RATHER LINEAR IN PLACES

■ Sly can use his cane to swing from overhead objects – the faster you move the Analogue Stick, the further he'll fly when you let go.

CRASH BANDICOOT 4



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS...



RAYMAN 2



ALL OUR CHILDHOOD DREAMS SHATTERED IN AN INSTANT

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

games™ **FINGERPRINT**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

I'M BLIND: Trying to keep Jango facing in the right direction when fighting multiple enemies is tough.

PIFF PAFF POFF: Behold, the disappearing man; you 'collect' your bounties by just walking into them.

DETAILS	
	FORMAT REVIEWED
	Playstation2
	ORIGIN
	US
	PUBLISHER
	DEVELOPER
	PRICE
	£39.99
	RELEASE
	Out Now
	PLAYERS
	1

■ Jango – you've let us down, you've let yourself down...

When we were young, we always wanted to be Boba Fett; that fearsome bounty hunter who had his own rocket pack, didn't have to say a word to be menacing and was just so damn cool it hurt. Leap nearly two decades into the present and we discover that someone has decided to make a videogame where you can actually 'be' a Fett. Okay, it's Jango, not Boba – but like father, like son, eh? Finally, our dreams have come true, right? Well, no, not really. In fact, the whole thing has turned into a bit of a nightmare.

You see, while the premise of *Star Wars: Bounty Hunter* sounds amazing on paper – and indeed, it did when LucasArts first announced it – the game actually turns out to be, in a word, arse. In fact, there's too much wrong with it for words; the graphics look dated (despite being on a next-gen console), the controls are clumsy, the level design is confusing and the whole thing

smacks of a cash-in rather than a quality title. There are far too many times where you'll be trudging through a level, not knowing where to go next. With no guidance aside from some rather vague mission goals to achieve, you'll be fed up before you know it.

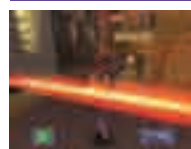
Even the promise of additional bounties to collect turns out to be annoying and uninspired. Rather than offering bonus side-missions as we expected, you'll find a set number of extra renegades wandering through each level; that means you have to scan each and every character you come across, just to discover if they're wanted or not. This is almost bearable in a normal situation, but trying to scan individuals in a crowd of hostile enemies is nigh-on impossible. What's most gutting about *Bounty Hunter* though is that the whole thing feels like Jango doesn't even need to be there – they could have stuck any loveable rogue/hired gun in there as the lead character and it'd feel exactly the same. It's almost as if LucasArts have stuck in a much-respected character just to secure sales – but they'd never do that, would they?

To be frank, *Bounty Hunter* is remarkably below par. Certainly, it's not the worst example of a *Star Wars* game (you have only to look at *Star Wars: Demolition* for that), but the fact that this game will sell off the back of a popular character, rather than the quality of the game, is a real con. We wouldn't touch it with your Gaffi Stick, let alone ours.

VERDICT 3/10

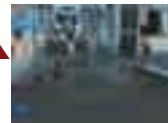
THIS ISN'T THE GAME YOU'RE LOOKING FOR – MOVE ALONG

GAMECUBE £39.99



Although some of the graphics look a bit nicer on the GameCube, the gameplay remains just as lacklustre and annoying. As you'd expect, polishing a turd doesn't make it smell any better.

JEDI POWER BATTLES



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



OBI WAN



■ Jango loses his jetpack at the start of the game – once you've managed to get it back, you can get even more frustrated.



■ Dual lightsabers against a pair of piddling blasters – hardly a fair fight. Still, we've suffered enough just getting to this last battle...



■ Hunting down additional bounties sounds like a nice touch, but having to scan every character you run into gets tiring very quickly.



Cowabunga, dude Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Arcade [Konami] 1989







A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.2 JANUARY 2003

00p

RETRO

MICRO GAMES ACTION

SPEEDBALL 2

SHOCKING FUTURISTIC ACTION
OR A LOAD OF OLD BALLS?

RICK DANGEROUS

A GREAT GAMING MOMENT

THE BITMAP BROTHERS

VIDEOGAME FAME

GAME OVER

CLASSIC END SEQUENCES

MEGA DRIVE
MONTHLY RETRO GAMES REVIEW
ONE-ON-ONE
FIGHTER HISTORY
THE WAY OF THE
EXPLODING FIST

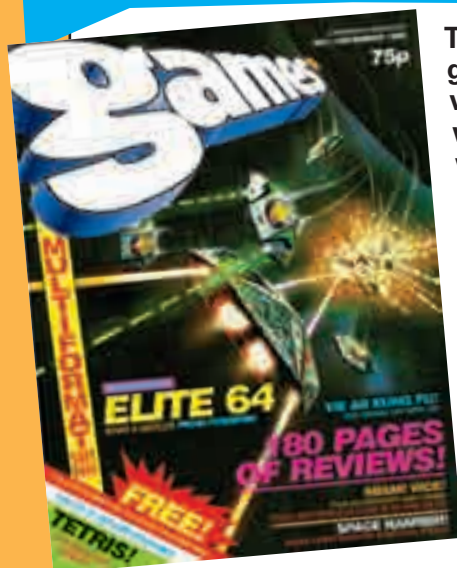
THIS MONTH IN 1986
PIXELLATED PLEASURES FROM THE 80s!

THE GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT

WE REPLAY WHERE TIME STOOD STILL
TO SEE IF IT REALLY HAS!

PLUS CLASSIC GAMING ADS!

This Month In 1986



This was arguably the golden age of videogames. Granted, we were all still playing with relatively archaic home systems, but these were heady days indeed and whilst the titles of the day may have lacked the flashy sounds and visuals of today's games, we made up for this with our imaginations. Things would only go downhill from here...

UK CHARTS FOR JAN 1986

- 1: West End Girls
Pet Shop Boys
- 2: Hit That Perfect Beat
Bronski Beat
- 3: The Sun Always Shines On TV
A-Ha
- 4: Saving All My Love For You
Whitney Houston
- 5: Saturday Love
Cherelle & Alexander O'Neal
- 6: Girlie Girlie
Sophia George
- 7: Merry Christmas Everyone
Shakin' Stevens
- 8: Walk Of Life
Dire Straits
- 9: Walking In The Air
Aled Jones
- 10: You Little Thief
Feargal Sharkey

SPECTRUM TOP TEN BY GALLUP

- 1: The Way Of The Exploding Fist
- 2: Daley Thompson's Super Test
- 3: Fairlight
- 4: Fighting Warrior
- 5: Frank Bruno's Boxing
- 6: Graham Gooch's Test Cricket
- 7: Shadow of the Unicorn
- 8: Impossible Mission
- 9: Bored of the Rings
- 10: Sorderon's Shadow

COMMODORE 64 TOP TEN BY GALLUP

- 1: Spy Vs Spy 2:
The Island Caper
- 2: Frank Bruno's Boxing
- 3: Summer Games 2
- 4: The Way Of The Exploding Fist
- 5: Who Dares Wins 2
- 6: Sky Fox
- 7: Barry McGuigan World Championship
- 8: Karateka
- 9: BEACH HEAD II
- 10: Blackwyche

WORLD NEWS

The year of 1986 was unfortunately plagued by a number of disasters, not least of which was the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in May. January of that year was also struck by misfortune when the



Challenger space shuttle blew up 73 seconds after takeoff. Among the seven astronauts on board was schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe, who'd been chosen in a special NASA scheme aimed at allowing ordinary people into space.

The cause of the catastrophe was believed to be a malfunction in one of the booster rocket that started a fire. The blaze caused the shuttle's fuel tanks to explode, resulting in one of the most memorably tragic moments of the Eighties.

Those who were around at the time are unlikely to ever forget the harrowing images that were broadcast around the globe.

GAMING NEWS JANUARY '86

By January 1986, the UK games market was really getting into its stride. Original games such as *Fairlight* by The Edge and *Saboteur* from Durell were doing good business, but perhaps the defining moment of this period was the coin-op conversion coming of age. British firms had previously been happy to knock out thinly-veiled clones of arcade hits, but they now began to acquire the home distribution rights for the genuine article.

Two standout conversions included Elite's excellent port of Capcom's *Commando* and Imagine's (who had become Ocean by this point) solid conversion of Konami's *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*. Whilst it wasn't a new concept, the film/TV show tie-in was also becoming more of an industry staple, with the then prolific Ocean tempting gamers with ads for *Street Hawk* and *V*.

These were crazy days indeed and if you couldn't snag a good film licence then anything would do, a case in point being the now defunct Martech's release of *Geoff Cape's Strongman* – think *Hyper Sports* with a bearded ex-policeman as the central character. In spite of all this, the humble text-based adventure genre was still struggling on, with firms such as Ocean (natch) releasing a passable videogame interpretation of *The NeverEnding Story*.

As the videogame market

expanded from its cottage industry roots, so too did the coverage of games within the specialist press. By this time programme listings and other such tedium (like articles explaining how to do your accounts on a computer) were thankfully all but a distant memory.

Instead, titles such as *Computer & Videogames*, *Crash* and *Zzap! 64* now focused almost entirely on gaming. In some ways this was the golden age of the 8-bit home computer in the UK, and by Christmas of 1987 the 8-bit consoles such as the Master System and NES, coupled with the 16-bit Amiga and Atari ST, would herald the end of the Spectrum and Commodore 64 era.

That said, the 8-bit computers didn't give up without a fight and continued to enjoy a decent trickle of software support from the likes of Ocean (natch, again) up until the early Nineties.



Elite's quality home conversion of Capcom's *Commando* was one of many hit ports doing the rounds during this period.

SIX OF THE BEST

SABOTEUR

Format: **Spectrum**

Publisher: **Durell**

This was arguably Durell's finest hour. Taking control of a highly skilled ninja your task was to infiltrate a high-security building, steal a secret disk, blow the place up and get the hell out (before the place blew up, obviously). The game's popularity ensured a sequel (*Saboteur II: Avenging Angel*), in which you controlled a female operative.



SIR FRED

Format: **Spectrum**

Publisher: **Mikro-Gen**

This enjoyable action/adventure title came from Mikro-Gen – the same people who gave us the *Wally* series of games – although it was actually programmed by three Spanish coders. Controlling the eponymous hero, it was your task to (gasp!) rescue a princess. The action centred more on puzzle solving as opposed to the platform leaping action of *Jet Set Willy*. Good fun, and worth having a look at on emulation.



YIE AR KUNG-FU

Format: **Spectrum, Amstrad, Commodore 64, BBC**

Publisher: **Imagine**

The premise of *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* was simple: take control of a young fighter called Oolong and punch or kick the hell out of a number of varied opponents. Only the omission of a two-player mode (something the coin-op itself lacked) let things down, but the game was a huge success.



SPELLBOUND

Format: **Spectrum**

Publisher: **Mastertronic**

The sequel to *Finders Keepers*, *Spellbound* saw you controlling Magic the knight. You had to rescue Gimbal the wizard and seven other characters who'd been trapped in the Castle of Karn after a failed experiment to make rice pudding taste nicer (no, really). It played much like its forbear, but was visually superior and introduced a 'dynamic' new menu system called Windimation.



The 8-bit home computer scene was in its element. The period between December 1985 and January 1986 saw the release of some extremely polished titles, including decent conversions of popular arcade games and a clutch of original titles to boot. We all had a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year...

I OF THE MASK

Format: **Spectrum**

Publisher: **Electric Dreams**

A peculiar title from Electric Dreams, which was coded by Sandy 'Ant Attack' White. You controlled a little guy who ran around a maze trying to assemble the components of an all-powerful robot. The game's 3D graphics were ahead of their time and *I Of The Mask* has a strangely playable quality today. *C&VG* described the game environment as a "Hitchcock-style maze". Eh? Answers on a postcard...



SWORDS AND SORCERY

Format: **Spectrum**

Publisher: **PSS**

A fairly early RPG that involved exploring a dungeon in order to locate a suit of armour. For its time, the game featured a fairly deep user-interface that allowed you to not only fight the various denizens of the dungeon, but also interact with them in other ways. In addition to this there were traps to contend with and simplistic puzzles to solve. While it may appear basic by today's standards, *Swords And Sorcery* was cutting-edge stuff back then.



IN THE ARCADES

This wasn't really one of the most memorable months for quality arcade games...

In a month of fairly lacklustre titles, there were a few stand-out games. SEGA gave us *Choplifter*, a game that required you to fly around in a helicopter picking up imprisoned comrades (almost like *Defender* on steroids, if you will). Tatsumi's *Buggy Boy* (aka *Speed Buggy*) also made an appearance in UK arcades this month. The machine came in two styles – one was a straightforward upright cabinet, whilst the deluxe model featured a three-screen display that gave the player a panoramic view of the action. Elite would later successfully convert the title to the 8-bit home systems, with the Commodore 64 version proving to be a particularly entertaining game.

Aside from these it was pretty much business as usual with distinctly average titles such as *Knuckle Joe* and *The Legend Of Kage* squeezing the pips out of the martial arts genre. However, whilst the arcade scene started off with something of a whimper in 1986, it would gain momentum later in the year with some memorable titles arriving within the next few months – not least of which was SEGA's magnificent *Out Run*.



Some versions of *Buggy Boy* had three screens for panoramic offroad action. Gripped! Sorted!



Choplifter saw you saving your mates with your big chopper (© Dominik Diamond, probably).

LOOK BACK: ANGER

Each month we take a look back at games we thought were good at the time, but were actually a bit well, you know.... This month we dispel the myth that *Pole Position* is an all time classic.

POLE POSITION

To be fair, Namco's 1982 racing game was undoubtedly influential in terms of the evolution of the driving game genre. With its vibrant visual style, speech and fast-paced action the game made most racing titles that had gone before it look positively anaemic.

Driving around the Fuji Speedway in your Indy Car seemed like enormous fun at the time, especially if you were playing in the sit-down cabinet. However, the driving genre has come on leaps and bounds in the 20 years since *Pole Position* first appeared. Yet while we happily acknowledge the game's significance within the genre, we do take exception to those nostalgic fools (and yes, they are out there) who claim "it's still the definitive driving game". For those of you still suffering from this delusion then we recommend you have a quick play of the title today.

You might just find an old cabinet tucked away in the dark recesses of a seaside arcade. Failing that, you can experience the game on a number of formats as part of the *Namco Museum* compilation packs. So we'll give you ten minutes to go and play it. Back? How did you find that handling? It's a little bit twitchy, isn't it? Come to think of it, did you have any fun whilst playing the game? Thought not. Of course, we don't want to start criticising old games for being, erm, old games, but there's no escaping the fact that *Pole Position* has had its day. SEGA's *Out Run* on the other hand is quite a different matter. Indeed, driving along with *Splash Wave* or *Magical Sound Shower* playing in the background remains one of the great gaming experiences.



In terms of visuals, *Pole Position* still has a certain charm, but the over-sensitive controls mean that keeping the car on the track is a tiresome task.

GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT...

Why do people insist on harping on about retro games without mentioning classics like these?

WHERE TIME STOOD STILL

Format: Spectrum 128K,
Atari ST, PC
Publisher: Ocean
Developer: Denton
Designs
Year: 1988



► That plane isn't going anywhere, so you'd better work out another way back to civilisation.

One of Denton Designs's finest hours was the atmospheric *The Great*

Escape. It's therefore a shame that the pseudo-sequel *Where Time Stood Still* didn't achieve the same commercial success, although it did win much critical acclaim. The game was similar to *The Great Escape*, but rather than taking place in a POW camp, the action was set on a peculiar mountain plateau where danger lurked all around.

Following a plane crash three passengers and the pilot had to escape from the mountain using brains and brawn. Impeding your progress were cannibal natives, roaming dinosaurs and rockfalls (among other things) and you'd only succeed by using each character's skills. The team's morale had to be monitored closely and if they were deprived of food and sleep they'd start complaining (especially fat businessman Clive). You had to account for the characters' personalities too. For example,

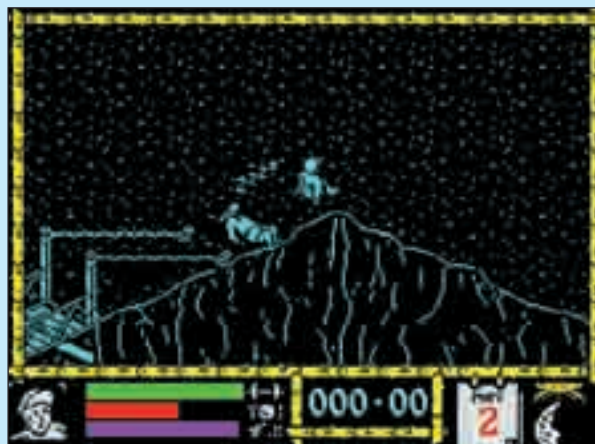
Dirk was usually quite helpful, but if Gloria (his fiancée) was killed he went into a sulk.

The puzzles were also well implemented; early on in the game the team had to cross a rickety bridge – simple enough, surely? However, as the podgy Clive made his way over the bridge it gave way underneath him, so you had to find a way of lifting the porker back up to safety.

With its blend of puzzle solving, team management and all-out action this was one of the most accomplished isometric adventures released on the Spectrum. It was also one of the toughest. In fact, did anybody ever save the hapless group...?

Presentation	80%
Graphics	85%
Playability	90%
Addictive qualities	90%
OVERALL	90%

If you pushed the characters too hard they became exhausted. Waiting for night to fall and letting them get some sleep was a good idea.



STRIDER

Format: **Arcade, MegaDrive, Various**
 Manufacturer: **Capcom**
 Developer: **Denton Designs**
 Year: **1989**

Capcom's superb *Strider* coin-op remains one of the most imaginative platform/action games ever released. The eponymous hero was an extremely versatile character who was capable of latching onto surrounding surfaces and scaling them in a Spider-Man-like manner. Furthermore, each of the game's five varied levels was packed full of set-pieces.

Perhaps *Strider's* strongest point however, were the huge guardians that cropped up throughout the stages. One of the most memorable of these was the centipede-like creature that appeared at the end of the first area. It wasn't exactly the toughest of bosses (it could be killed almost instantly if you rapidly slashed at its head), but in terms of originality it puts most of its contemporaries to shame. Allow us to expand on this...

After making your way across the rooftops of a futuristic city, hacking a strongman to pieces and

destroying a laser-spitting defence system, you entered the chambers of a Politburo. Within seconds of entering, the assembled members threw themselves out of their seats and formed a huge hammer and sickle-wielding centipede. As mentioned, this strange beast could be defeated fairly easily, but by killing it straight away players were depriving themselves of a most unusual ride. More fun could be had by jumping over the creature's head and hanging onto its back, thus allowing you time to admire this most peculiar of bosses in all its many-legged glory. You have to wonder how people think of this stuff. Still, we doff our caps to them.



We trust you'll agree with us that this is one of the videogaming's most bizarre guardians. And one of the pinkest.

STAR GAMES

This issue we look at *Robocop 2's* untimely destruction of a *Bad Dudes Vs. Dragon Ninja* coin-op...

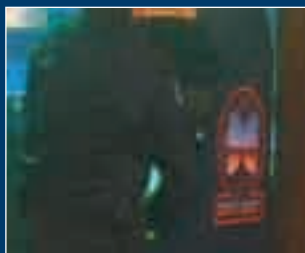
BAD DUDES VS DRAGON NINJA

The original *Robocop* (1987) movie is, in our humble opinion, one of the finest films of the Eighties. Its blend of dark, comic book humour and over-the-top violence really struck a cord with us at **games™**. Suffice to say, when the staggeringly crap sequel arrived in 1990 we were more than a little disappointed. A weak cast and the truly awful commercial breaks (which were so amusing in the first film) made this significantly inferior to the original. However, if you could stay awake for the duration of the movie then you may have noticed a cornucopia of Data East coin-ops cropping up (the fact that Data East produced the arcade versions of *Robocop* and *Robocop 2* was, no doubt, purely coincidental).

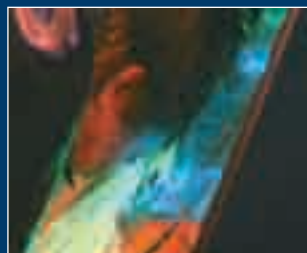
The scene in question takes place when our hero is attempting to locate where Nuke (a powerful new

narcotic) is being manufactured. Unfortunately for a crooked cop named Officer Duffy (who's been selling off the patrol patterns of his colleagues, thus leaving them sitting ducks for the criminals), he's in the wrong amusement arcade as Robocop conducts a raid. Before Duffy can escape he's apprehended and tossed around like a rag doll by the titanium-clad super cop.

Among the many coin-ops you see is the enjoyable shooter *Midnight Resistance*, but the star of the show is undoubtedly *Bad Dudes Vs. Dragon Ninja*. Having already received a drubbing at the metallic hands of the law, Officer Duffy soon has his head introduced to the monitor of the beat-'em-up coin-op. The screen shatters, but the game plays on – they just don't make 'em like they used to. They were right when they said videogames were bad for you...



Officer Duffy is about to discover that it's game over for corrupt cops.



Playing videogames for long periods of time can cause headaches and nausea.



With Duffy's bleeding head lifted back we can (just about) see *Bad Dudes Vs. Dragon Ninja* in action.

GODFATHERS OF GAMING

GUNPEI YOKOI (1941-1997)



Each month, **games™** takes a look at a key figure from the world of videogames. The featured individual may have developed a hugely influential game, created some pioneering hardware or simply come up with an idea that took the industry forward. This issue, we look at Gunpei Yokoi – the father of handheld gaming.

Whilst the likes of Peter Molyneux and Shigeru Miyamoto enjoy celebrity status in the videogame industry, some people's achievements have gone relatively unnoticed. A case in point being the late Gunpei Yokoi. During the Sixties, Yokoi worked at Nintendo maintaining production line machinery. His passion for electronics brought him to the attention of Nintendo's President, Hiroshi Yamauchi. With the Christmas rush of 1970 fast approaching, Yamauchi asked Yokoi to design a new product. This toy was the Ultrahand, a peculiar grabbing device that sold millions. Soon after, Nintendo's attention turned to videogames and Yokoi created the massively popular *Game & Watch* series that set Nintendo on the path to games industry domination. He also created the *Metroid* series that remains a firm favourite today.

However, it is for the design of the Game Boy console that Yokoi is best remembered. The machine (and subsequent versions of it) have achieved massive global success and arguably kept the wolf from Nintendo's door during its leaner years. Sadly, Yokoi's Virtual Boy, whilst visionary in concept, was a commercial failure (though it now has a cult following). In the mid-Nineties, Yokoi set up his own firm, Koto Laboratory. Tragically, he was killed in a car accident in 1997, but his legend lives on.

Retro

a

JOB

in

VIDEOGAMES...

PLAYING GAMES CAN BE TOUGH SOMETIMES. BUT A NUMBER OF TITLES HAVE TAUGHT US THAT THERE ARE WORSE JOBS OUT THERE.

LUMBERJACK TIMBER

Midway ■ 1984

Now, we know the eighties was the era of 'high concept', but Midway's *Timber* took things to an extreme. One or two players controlled a woodsman as he attempted to fell a set number of trees in each stage.

Your boss, sitting in a shack at the top of the screen, was always casting his beady eyes on you, and later stages saw the appearance of odd woodland foes and grizzly bears (the latter would enter the screen and throw beehives at you). Breaking up the tree-cutting action was a bonus stage where your character was required to stay upright on a rolling log for a set time.

As it is, this is the only dedicated lumberjack simulation we know of, although other games such as *Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny* let you indulge in a bit of casual deforestation. All together now: "He cuts down trees, he eats his lunch, he goes to the lavatory...". Monty Python has a lot to answer for.



In theory, videogames are a form of escapism – offering players a chance to slip away from the more tedious aspects of everyday life such as work, school or college. Indeed, gaming affords people the chance to do something that they might otherwise never get to experience in real life. Yet since the early days of the industry there's been a

string of releases that have simulated occupations from which most people would normally run a mile. Bizarrely, these games have often proved to be very popular, going directly against the adage "don't mix business with pleasure". We take a look at some of the titles that make you work for your entertainment.

PAPER DELIVERY

PAPERBOY

Atari ■ 1984

A good percentage of us have at one point or another experienced the misery of taking on a paper round. It's fair to say that lugging around a bag full of newspapers (the weight of which would give Geoff Capes a hernia) in the earlier hours of the morning is not really much fun.

Irate customers complaining about missing colour supplements, subscribers with drives a mile long and the dog at number 73 (which made Cerberus look like Lassie) were just a few things that had to be tolerated if you wanted to boost your

pocket money. So what does Atari go and do? Yep, release *Paperboy* – a game that saw players cycling through a suburban street, delivering papers and trying to avoid the local lunatics – chillingly close to real life.



Of course, the game's vibrant graphics, unique handlebar control system (on the coin-op version) and the hugely imaginative gameplay made *Paperboy* a winner. Naturally, the irony of delivering papers in real life so that we could afford to pay for a videogame that involved doing the same, was lost on us back then.

RESTAURANT WORKER

BURGER TIME

Data East/Bally Midway ■ 1982

"Would you like fries with that, sir?" Yes indeed, it's the cry of oily-skinned, disinterested fast-food assistants around the country – and our hearts go out to these overworked,



underpaid souls. We remember being told by despairing career officers that if we didn't knuckle down at school we'd end up flipping burgers for a living. Strangely, *Burger Time* made the job look like fun.

Controlling Peter Pepper, your task was to walk over the ingredients of burgers (which were suspended from platforms for some reason) and cause each segment to drop down onto plates at the bottom of the screen. Making things trickier were patrolling enemies such as Mr Egg, Mr Pickle and Mr Hotdog who could only be stopped temporarily with a pinch of pepper. See? Much better than the real thing.

REFUSE COLLECTOR

TRASHMAN

New Generation Software ■ 1984

Only the British could come up with a game that placed you in the role of an up-and-coming refuse collector. *Trashman* for the Spectrum allowed wannabe dustbin people (let's be politically correct here) to indulge their dirtiest fantasies. Your goal was to rise from the rank of rookie binman to the giddy heights of trash management.

In gameplay terms this involved the efficient emptying of dustbins, avoiding traffic such as kids on bikes (if these tinkers rode over your feet your speed was reduced) and

evading neighbourhood canines.

Get hit by a car and you were dead – we can only assume that the wounds from the winter of discontent had yet to heal when the programmer came up with the idea for this one.



MECHANIC

AUTOMANIA

Micro-Gen ■ 1984

With a sharp intake of breath, rub your hands on an oily cloth and announce: "Sorry mate, it's going to be a big job". The big job in question? Finding the parts for ten different cars and then assembling them in the garage.

This was the game that introduced Wally Week to the world and a recent play of *Automania* revealed that it was much harder than we remember. Whether or not the life of a typical mechanic involves jumping around a series of moving platforms remains to be seen. If so, it might explain why your car is never ready when they say it will be.



BARMAN

TAPPER

1983 ■ Bally Midway

Anyone who has ever worked behind the bar of a busy pub will feel right at home with *Tapper*. The game saw you controlling a moustachioed bartender who had to serve Budweiser to thirsty customers and collect the empties that they slung back at him.

Tips could be scooped up and occasionally a few dancing girls would prance around a bit to distract customers. The game did a pretty good job of emulating a job in the bar trade and you even got an after-hours drink when you cleared the place out. A non-alcoholic version called *Root Beer Tapper* was made for kids.



STORE DETECTIVE

GRUMPY GUMPHREY: SUPER SLEUTH

Gremlin ■ 1985

You had the dubious honour of being a store detective in Gremlin's unusual arrest-'em-up for the Spectrum. Guiding the doddering old-timer of the title around the Mole Bros department store (a tribute to Monty), the name of the game here was to collar sneaky shoplifters who were trying to make off without paying for various items. If you let too many of these felons get away then you could say hello to your P45.

Not one of Gremlin's biggest hits, the game did at least instil a basic sense of right and wrong in young players. About time too, eh?



POLICE OFFICER

A.P.B.

Atari ■ 1987

Atari's novel coin-op saw you fighting crime in the guise of Officer Bob.

Viewed from an overhead perspective, you patrolled the streets in your cop car fining litterbugs, arresting perps and stopping off for the odd doughnut. Once you'd made your arrest you had to literally beat a confession out of the suspect before the chief arrived. We're quite sure this would never happen in real life...



TRAFFIC WARDEN

CHUBBY GRISTLE

Grandslam ■ 1988

Along with estate agents and lawyers, traffic wardens must rank as one of the most hated groups in society. Here you played the eponymous 'hero' who, along with informing people that they "can't park there", also had a voracious appetite.

The game itself was a fairly decent platformer that borrowed both its structure and visual style from the *Monty Mole* games. Unsurprisingly, with such an unlovable central character the title failed to capture the imaginations of gamers. That said, watching Chubby suffering gave us an unusual sense of well-being.



FACTORY WORKER

NIGHT SHIFT

US Gold/LucasArts ■ 1990

Production line work is never easy, but in LucasArts's quirky action/puzzle title that's exactly what you had to do. Working for the Industrial Might and Logic company (can you see what they did there?) you had to maintain a machine that produced various toys and dolls. These were all themed around various Lucas franchises including *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*.

As in reality, things didn't run smoothly and the machine you were working with was prone to more than the odd breakdown or two. True to form, a quota of products had to be produced by the end of each shift – failure to meet this led to dismissal. On the plus side, if you performed well you got a nice big bonus for your efforts. If only factory work was this much fun in real life. Sadly, as we've learned from past experience, it isn't.



THIS MONTH'S FAVOURITES

Putting together the second issue proved to be no easier than the first. Fortunately, these ageing classics pulled us through the darkest hours.

BOMB JACK

(Tehkan, 1984) This title had our caped hero defusing lines of bombs. Charming characters, cute graphics and surprisingly tricky gameplay ensure that *Bombjack* remains a firm favourite.



ROLLING THUNDER

(Namco, 1986) *Rolling Thunder* saw Special Agent Albatross taking on the evil forces of an organisation known as Geldra. This laid down the blueprint for SEGA's fantastic *Shinobi*. Respect.



MONTY ON THE RUN

(Gremlin Graphics, 1985) Having dusted down our Commodore 64 we loaded up one of Monty's best-loved adventures only to be shocked at just how tough it really was.



R-TYPE

(Irem, 1987) Even 15 years after its release, few side-scrolling shoot-'em-ups have managed to equal Irem's superlative coin-op. If you don't already own it, get *R-Type* for the PSone.



R.I.C.K D.A.N.G.E.R.O.U.S

THE GREAT BOULDER DASH...

Format(s): Amiga/Atari ST (various conversions followed)
Publisher: Firebird
Developer: Core Design
Release date: 1988

In 1988, the world of videogames was introduced to a new hero: Rick Dangerous – a man who laughed in face of the danger and wasn't afraid to poke his rod into the odd hole or two (we won't expand on this). Indiana Jones may have had some tough encounters during his scrapes with the Nazis, but poor old Rick had it even worse.

Unlike many modern games that guide players by the hand with nice friendly training sections, *Rick Dangerous* threw you right in at the deep end. It also featured one of the most dramatic opening sequences of all time. After loading the game, players were greeted with a title screen depicting our eponymous daredevil and a brief plot outline explaining how Rick had crashed his plane while searching for the lost Goolu tribe.

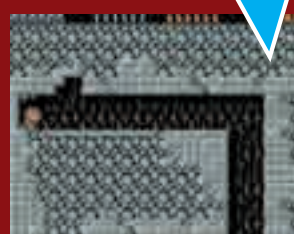
After this, it was into the game proper (indulgent 15-minute FMV sequences hadn't been invented back then, you see), with Rick standing in what looked to be an empty network of tunnels. No problems here, or so you'd think. The only way to head was right, so

off you went on your merry way.

Then it happened... After just a few short moments our hero found himself fleeing from a rolling boulder that, would you believe it, was tumbling straight towards him.

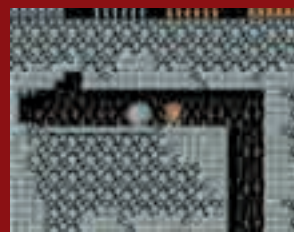
What ensued was a desperate race as you negotiated your way through a series of narrow caverns, with the aforementioned boulder constantly threatening to crush the life out of you – as you might expect, players who dragged their heels paid with their lives (well, not literally). Of course, after a few attempts it all clicked into place, but even when you'd escaped, you had to contend with the rest of the game's fiendishly tricky levels, most of which were packed with booby traps. This was an incredibly unforgiving title.

As memorable gaming moments go, the old boulder dash scene is up there with the best of them. A next generation remake of *Rick Dangerous* remains high on **games™**'s wish list, just so long as it's kept 2D (chance would be a fine thing...).



STEP ONE

An empty tunnel, what could possibly go wrong?



STEP TWO

Oh dear, things have taken a turn for the worse.



STEP THREE

Is there no escape from this blasted rolling stone?



STEP FOUR

Get a move on or Rick's going to be getting a lot thinner.



STEP FIVE

Escape at last, but the adventure is only just beginning...

GHOST'N GOBLINS

© CAPCOM



Why Don't they Remake?



S·T·U·N·T C·A·R R·A·C·E·R

Released: 1989
Publisher: MicroStyle
Format: Atari ST, Amiga, PC, Commodore 64, Spectrum

With the world and its brother seemingly releasing tawdry sequels and updates of any old rubbish, it's surprising to find that there are a number of true classics out there that have been left in the past. This month we take a look at *Stunt Car Racer*, a game we'd love to see on today's systems.

When the topic of games people want to see updated comes up, you can be certain that at least one person will mention *Stunt Car Racer*. Even 13 years after its release, Geoff Crammond's sublime driving title stands as one of the most original racing games ever developed and puts many modern examples of the genre to shame.

The game saw one or two players (STs and Amigas could be linked up for two player action) racing around eight hugely imaginative tracks in a series of one-on-one races. These weren't your average flat courses though; instead they bore closer resemblance to a rollercoaster. Starting off relatively easy, the stages soon became far more testing, with later levels featuring stomach-churning twists, jumps and finally a moving drawbridge.

Mastering each of the eight tracks was no easy task and judging when to engage your limited turbo boost was pivotal to success – take a corner or

jump too fast and you'd find yourself plummeting to the ground (there were no trackside barriers to save you here, although a crane would lift you back onto the track). Too many accidents and your customised racer would end up as smoking wreck.

Visually, the game had a fairly minimalist look about it, yet this worked in its favour by adding a somewhat surreal feel to proceedings. Likewise, sound consisted of a raspy engine noise – no epic orchestral scores here. Of course this didn't matter, because the fiendishly designed tracks and frantic gameplay (winning in the First Division was no small feat) carried the whole thing through.

Past updates of old favourites often fall flat on their faces, with the new games missing the point of what made the originals so great. However, we honestly believe that if Mr Crammond himself updated this for the current crop of consoles (or the PC) then this could be something very special. What with online console



The 8-bit conversions were of a surprisingly high quality. Even the humble Spectrum version (pictured) had a fairly good stab at emulating its 16-bit cousins.



The Big Ramp was the second track in the Third Division. Compared to the torturous later stages this was relatively tame.

gaming looming, now would be the ideal time to consider reinventing *Stunt Car Racer* for the 21st Century. Failing that, we recommend you dust down that old Amiga or Atari ST and relive the golden days.



A large amount of time was spent in the air – it was possible to jump over your opponent as well as sneak under them when they were airborne.



Very rarely would you find yourself on a flat surface. Huge bumps, jumps and dips were liberally scattered around each of the tracks.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN...

We get all misty-eyed about things from the videogame industry of yesteryear that have sadly disappeared from the gaming scene...

THE KEMPSTON JOYSTICK INTERFACE

What the hell was this all about? We remember seeing adverts for the Kempston Joystick Interface in the specialist videogame magazines of the day, and pretty much every single Spectrum game released supported the device. Yet not once (and we're not exaggerating here) did we ever meet anybody who owned one of the bloody things (granted, we did see a few in the shops). Quite what was going here remains a mystery; did any of you people out there actually have one of these mythical interfaces? If you did then please drop us a line, we really would love to hear from you.



LAST MONTH'S SPECTRUM SCREENS NAMED

We know that some of you have been going out of your mind trying to identify some of the Spectrum images we printed in issue one of **games™**. Here, we put you out of your misery. From left to right, starting from the top, the games were...

FIRST ROW

Spectrum Title Screen
Thrust
Zorro
Back to Skool
Barry McGuigan World
Championship Boxing
Spy Hunter
The Happiest Days Of Your Life
Head Over Heels
Highlander
Trashman

SECOND ROW

Agent-X II: The Mad Prof's Back!
Army Moves
Batman
Bobby Bearing
Bomb Jack
Hydrofool
Hyper Sports
Hyper Sports (again)
IK +
Saboteur

THIRD ROW

Bubble Bobble
C5 Clive
Cauldron
Cauldron II: The Pumpkin Strikes Back
Chuckie Egg
Infiltrator
Jack the Nipper
Jetpac
Jet Set Willy
Joust

FOURTH ROW

Cobra
Contact Sam Cruise
Cyclone
Cyrox
Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future
Juggernaut
Roller Coaster
Thanatos
King's Ransom
Knight Lore

FIFTH ROW

Starglider
The Trapdoor
Death Star Interceptor
Daley Thompson's Decathlon
Doomdark's Revenge
Knight-Tyme
Kokotoni Wilf
Kung-Fu Master
Lunar Jetman
Manic Miner

SIXTH ROW

Driller
Into The Eagles Nest
Starquake
Elite
Enduro Racer
Marsport

Tapper
Max Headroom
Miami Vice
Mikie

SEVENTH ROW

Exolon
Fat Worm Blows A Sparky
Fighting Warrior
Firetrap
Grange Hill
Spiky Harold
Nodes Of Yesod
Nosferatu The Vampire
Paperboy
Pyracurse

EIGHTH ROW

The Great Escape
Green Beret
Gunfright
Sabre Wulf
Hall Of The Things
Quazatron
Raid Over Moscow
Rambo: First Blood Part II
Rebel Star
Rogue Trooper



What were they thinking?

To be fair, we all make mistakes and bad decisions from time to time. As history has shown, our friends in the videogame industry are no less prone than the rest of us to making the odd blunder or two. In an occasional section, we take a look at some of the slightly less informed decisions taken by some of the firms in the industry. This month we marvel at how both Atari and Midway managed to miss out on signing some of the most successful games in coin-op history.

Aside from the most reclusive individuals who've hidden themselves away from the harsh realities of modern society, there can be few people who haven't heard of Namco's celebrated *Pac-Man* (or *Puckman*, if you must) coin-op. Created by Toru Iwatani, whose inspiration for the eponymous central character came whilst eating a pizza (come on, you know the story by now), the title went on to become one of the most successful videogames of all time.

It also spawned a clutch of sequels and spin-offs, as well as a heap of merchandise. *Pac-Man* was, put simply, a phenomenon. The game's simplistic four-way control system coupled with its exceptionally addictive gameplay ensured that it appealed not only to teenage boys, but also older gamers and the elusive female market.

Despite the obvious genius of the game (easy to say with the benefit of hindsight...), an unnamed individual at Atari who had been offered the sub-licence for the title in the lucrative US market decided that the game was "too easy". Consequently, Namco passed the offer onto one of Atari's key rivals, Midway, who went



A bad decision by Bally/Midway gave Atari the sub-licensing rights to *Pole Position*. Somebody at Atari must have been laughing all the way to the bank...

on to make a small fortune from the game – a bit like Decca failing to sign the Beatles. But it didn't end there.

Obviously trying to trump Atari in the missed opportunity stakes, Bally/Midway would later decline US distribution rights to Namco's *Pole Position*, favouring another Namco title, *Mappy*, instead. Ironically, Atari then went on to snap up the *Pole Position* sub-licence in the US, with the game going on to become one of the highest grossing coin-ops of 1983.

No doubt a number of executives at both Atari and Bally/Midway got a good grilling for their decisions, although trying to put names to who made these rather misguided choices isn't easy. No doubt management blamed the tea boy, cleaner...



Apparently, Bally/Midway thought that US gamers would prefer to play cat and mouse than drive fast cars. US gamers proved otherwise.



Amazingly, somebody at Atari felt that *Pac-Man* wouldn't appeal to a US audience. So Midway stepped in and the rest, as they say, is history.

Retro

Classic Machine

Japan: October 1988, price ¥21,000
US: Limited Release in LA and New York, August 1989
US: General Release, September 1989, price \$190
UK: November 1990, price £189.99

MEGA DRIVE 16 BIT



THE BEGINNING

Up until the release of the SEGA Mega Drive (SEGA Genesis in the US), Nintendo and its NES console had a vice-like grip on the home console and videogame market. Having failed to make any major impact with its superior 8-bit Master System, SEGA decided to go for the jugular by releasing a substantially more powerful console, the Mega Drive. The 16-bit console only sold moderately well in its native Japan,

but in the US and European markets the machine went down a storm; thanks in no small part to some great co-op conversions and polished sports sims.

It's arguable that the Mega Drive effectively forced Nintendo into bringing forward its successor to the Famicom/NES, as without any competition the Japanese giant could have sat back and let the money roll in from its still-popular 8-bit system. If nothing else, the Mega Drive showed that Nintendo was not untouchable and its release effectively heralded the beginning of the console wars that are still raging today.

THE END

As is so often the case with firms that have enjoyed rapid success in a market, SEGA began to lose its direction. As the popularity of 16-bit systems began to decline, the

erstwhile console manufacturer released a number of ill-judged hardware add-ons for the Mega Drive, including the white elephants that were the Mega CD and the 32X. Both were expensive, lacked any decent software and ultimately went on to sully SEGA's reputation in the eyes of gamers.

Nintendo, by contrast, handled things with much more savvy. Its Super Famicom/SNES was also suffering, but rather than go down the hardware add-on road the firm scrapped its planned CD peripheral (this would come back to haunt Nintendo, but that's another story) and instead bolstered the quality of its games by incorporating internal chips such as the Super FX into cartridges. Sadly, SEGA would never recapture the position it had held during the Mega Drive era and, despite being loved by the hard-core gaming community, both the Saturn and Dreamcast were commercial failures.



THE JOYPAD

When the Mega Drive launched in Japan in 1988, the need for more than three action buttons on the face of a joypad wouldn't have been a priority (remember, *Street Fighter II* didn't arrive until 1991). To be fair, the Mega Drive's controller was actually quite good – the ergonomic design was significantly superior to that of, say, the NES or PC Engine, although it lacked the innovation and flair that Nintendo's effort on the Super Famicom would later display. Sadly, as the popularity of one-on-

PERIPHERALS AND ADD-ONS

Few console manufacturers have been able to resist releasing extravagant and often wildly misguided extra bits and pieces for their machines. SEGA was no exception and launched some rather ill-judged peripherals for the Mega Drive.

The Menacer light gun peripheral was badly designed and lacked any decent compatible software (although, to be fair, it was better than Nintendo's dire Super Scope). More serious however, was the release of the Mega CD. This 'wonderful' piece of kit initially sold for several hundred pounds. In real terms it offered players little more than grainy FMV sequences and slightly improved music. Few developers utilised the extra graphical capabilities that the Mega CD afforded them (not that they were that great anyway). CORE's *Thunderhawk* was one of the better titles, but that's about it.

Adding insult to injury was the 32X – a badly-thought-out stopgap that improved the capabilities of the MegaDrive whilst we waited for the Saturn. Again, software support was thin on the ground and the only thing the device did successfully was to further sully SEGA's already tainted reputation. Oh dear.

SEGA

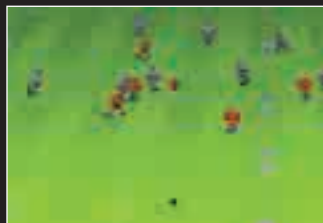


one beat-'em-ups flourished, the three-button set-up became increasingly unacceptable. Consequently, SEGA released a six-button pad (complete with a strange "mode button"), but it was too late in the day and many gamers had switched to Nintendo's 16-bit console.

KEY GAMES

The Mega Drive played host to a broad range of software that covered pretty much all the key genres. We single out a number of the major titles that helped the machine win its way into the hearts of gamers.

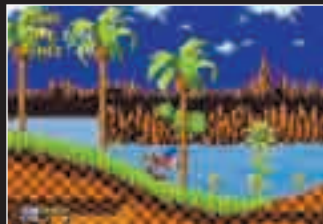
JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL



John Madden Football. EA's game was, put simply, light-years ahead of any similar title on a rival home system (*10-Yard Fight* on the NES, anyone?).

With great visuals, a well-thought-out control interface and a huge library of plays, *John Madden Football* went down very well in both the US and Europe. It's a testament to the original game's quality that the series is still running today. Ironically, where EA had helped the MegaDrive grow in the US, the firm had a hand in the Dreamcast's demise by choosing not to develop for SEGA's 128-bit machine.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



The one thing SEGA (and, by definition, the Mega Drive) lacked was a memorable mascot to rival Nintendo's ubiquitous Mario – sorry, but Alex Kidd just wasn't up to the job. Consequently, in 1991 a blue hedgehog named Sonic blasted his way

onto our screens and became the firm's figurehead (he probably handled the marketing campaign for Dreamcast as well...).

As it happened, *Sonic The Hedgehog* was inferior to Nintendo's *Super Mario World*, lacking the depth of the plumber-centric masterpiece (SEGA fanboys, please don't write in about this – it's just our opinion and we're sticking by it). However, the game's fast, flashy visuals managed to win over a significant number of players and the much anticipated sequel *Sonic The Hedgehog 2* went on to become the biggest-selling Mega Drive game in the machine's history.

GOLDEN AXE



Despite what the press said at the time, *Golden Axe* on the Mega Drive was not "arcade perfect" by a long chalk. Unlike the coin-op, the corpses of defeated foes did not petrify and stay on-screen. Furthermore, the end sequence of the original (where the virtual arcade blew up and the characters escaped) was also missing. These were just a few of the many deficits in the consumer version. That said, to the untrained eye the conversion did look pretty good and MD *Golden Axe* was of a sufficiently high quality to convince players that the MegaDrive was superior to the NES. Decent ports of *Ghouls 'n Ghosts* and *Strider* further boosted the machine's status, although again, neither were perfect translations.

But is it art?

Now before we start, let's make it clear that bad artwork for Western releases was by no means a problem exclusive to the MegaDrive (just think of the image on the PAL version of *Street Fighter 2* for the Super Nintendo). However, the dire imagery that adorned the covers of UK MegaDrive games was especially offensive. A case in point was *Strider*. The Japanese version featured a lovely stylish image, whereas its Western counterpart centred on a guy who looked not dissimilar to William Shatner. And as for that black grid design... please.

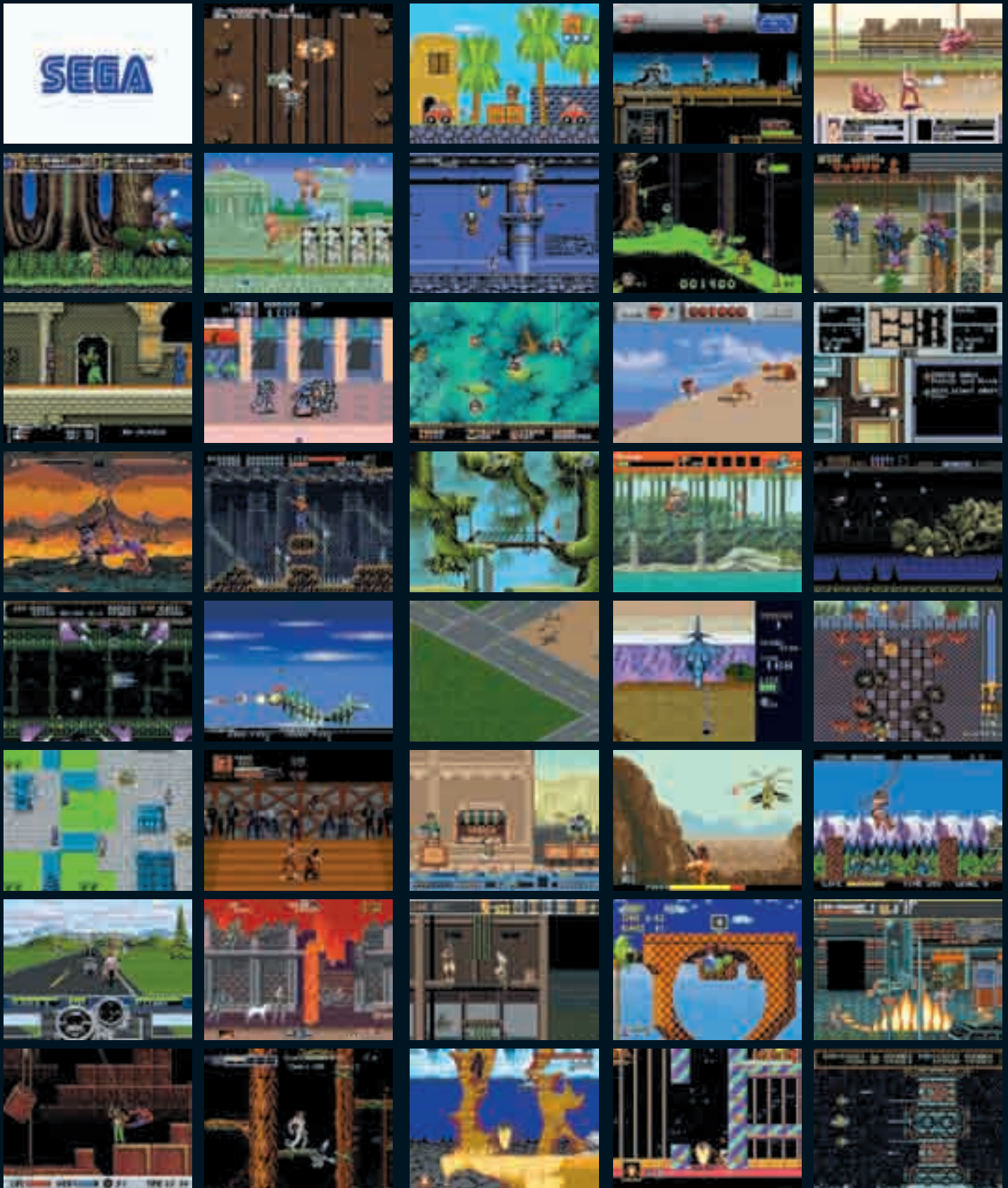


Look at the lovely Japanese artwork, it's rather easy on the eye, isn't it?



Now examine this 'delightful' little image. Surely it would look good hanging above the fireplace, non?

MEGADRIJE ICE



NEOGEO

Classic
Machine



ONE-ON-ONE BEAT-'EM-UPS FAMILY TREE

KARATE CHAMP

- 1984
- Arcade, Various Home Systems

The best-of-three rounds system, bonus stages and a wide range of attacks were just a handful of the game's innovations. The game's two joystick control system didn't catch on, however.



KUNG-FU

- 1984
- ZX Spectrum

Bug-Byte's effort offered players a chance to enjoy some tight action in the comfort of their own homes. The game was generally quite limited, although it did include an action replay option to keep you bawling.



YIE AR KUNG-FU

- 1985
- Arcade, Various Home Systems

The appearance of the character and enemy variety fighters (including female foes) were firsts for the genre. Weapons and projectile attacks also featured – the latter preceded *Street Fighter*'s Hadoken and suchlike.



WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

- 1985
- Various Home Systems

Essentially a home conversion of the arcade game *Karate Champ*, this title helped establish the popularity of the genre. Unfortunately, even the definitive C64 version suffered the 'sweep defeats all' flaw that would plague other games.



INTERNATIONAL KARATE

- 1985/86
- Various Home Systems

McLean's game improved upon the first with better graphics, tighter controls and a range of international locations. As with... *Fist* the C64 version – with its superior sound and visuals – was the one to own.



KNIGHT GAMES

- 1986
- 8-bit Computers

This title was a sort of bridgehead for the most part, *Knight Games* focused on weapon-based combat. Repetitive it may have been, but to be fair it was quite polished for the time (as was the amount...).



IK +

- 1987/88
- Various Home Systems

This outing had three on-screen fighters, okay, so it's not quite one-on-one and it's not quite a good Rob Hubbard soundtrack and some top sound effects. Dropping the trousers of a foe still raises a smile.



BARBARIAN

- 1987
- Various Home Systems

Taking its cue from the *Conan* movies, this enjoyable sword-based beat-'em-up gained notoriety for its lack of a story campaign. It did, however, precede *Conan* by including some of the earliest fatality moves.



REALISM

From oldies like *Karate Champ* through to *Street Fighter II* and *Tekken 4*, the one-on-one fighting game has always been a firm favourite with gamers. It's had its up and downs, but even today the genre remains popular, if somewhat stagnant. Here, we present a concise guide to the games that punched and kicked their way into videogame history.

BRIAN JACK'S UCHI-MATA

- 1986
- Various Home Systems

Uchi-mata's game was a more technical effort, which unusually centred on the martial art of Judo rather than Karate or Kung-Fu. Not bad, but the whole Judo simulation thing never really caught on.



SPITTING IMAGE

- 1988
- Various Home Systems

Tedious slap-'em-up based on the satirical puppet show. Fighting with characters such as the Pope may sound amusing, but it's not. Early proof that fighting games and humour don't mix.



I LUDICROUS

- 1989
- Amiga, Atari ST

Another badly judged stab at the comedy fighting market. This time round you were controlling a hapless gladiator as he battled a number of ill-conceived opponents. About as funny as standing on a rusty nail.



SNK

STREET SMART

- 1989
- Arcade, MegaDrive

An early and wholly unremarkable foray into the genre for SNK – a firm which would later go on to become a major player in the one-on-one field. Even the idea of fighting in the street had been done before...



BUDOKAN

- 1991
- C64, MegaDrive, Various

A much deeper average arcade-style beat-'em-up, which, unusually for a beat-'em-up, required a modicum of thought and restraint. It introduced disciplines including Kendo, added greater depth to the game.



FATAL FURY

- 1991
- Neo Geo

With only three fighters to choose from, this didn't trouble *Street Fighter* too much. The game's most memorable innovation was the way that certain characters allowed fighters to switch between two planes.



VIOLENCE FIGHT

- 1989
- Arcade

Massively lacklustre in terms of gameplay, this 'fatio' title (along with other rapid releases of the time) led many to the conclusion that the one-on-one beat-'em-up was dead in the water. As we know, this was not the case.



STREET FIGHTER II

- 1991
- Arcade, Various Home Conversions

After the mediocre *Street Fighter* Capcom returned with one of the most astounding titles in gaming history. The game managed to revive the flagging coin-op market and the one-on-one beat-'em-up.



SEGA

HOLLOSSEUM

- 1992
- Arcade

SEGA had learned little from the failure of previous arcade beat-'em-ups. *Time* magazine style, *Time* *Traveler* coin-op and this dire beat-'em-up followed it up with that used similar technology. The game made little impact in arcades.



MORTAL KOMBAT

- 1992
- Arcade, Various Home Conversions

Across America, the Japanese version of the game that lacked any of the subtleties of *Street Fighter II*. But it did contain gory fatality moves, which helped it gain notoriety and, in turn, commercial success.



SAMURAI SHODOWN



- 1993
- Neo Geo, 3DO
- By now, SNK was a major player in the genre. The firm's *Samurai Shodown* eschewed the hand-to-hand combat of rival titles and instead allowed players to indulge in some beautifully balanced weapon-based combat.

ETERNAL CHAMPIONS



- 1993
- MegaDrive
- For a time, SEGA's 16-bit console lacked its own variant of *Street Fighter* / so a number of clones popped onto the MegaDrive, this being one of the more famous efforts. Sadly, and inevitably, it lacked any of the flair of Capcom's game.

RISE OF THE ROBOTS



- Various
- This shamefully bad release was backed up by an enormous amount of hype, with the game's developers promising players the world. Instead they delivered one of the most flawed and tedious examples of the genre ever seen.

SOUL EDGE/BLADE



- 1995
- Arcade, PSone
- A spiritual successor to weapon-based titles such as *Barbaren*. It did moderately well and the PSone conversion gained cult status. Then, of course, there was the sequel, *Soul Calibur*, which helped shift a few Dreamcasts.

BLOODY ROAR



- 1997
- Arcade, PSone
- Perhaps influenced by the 'transform into an animal' element from SEGA's *Altered Beast*, *Bloody Roar* from the mid-90s was pretty much business as usual, and the game spawned some equally unremarkable sequels.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4



- 2001
- Arcade/PS2 later
- After SEGA's exit from the arcade market, the series finally turned up on a Sony console. Again, some criticised the game's lack of innovation, but there's no denying its quality. A newer version, *Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution*, is in arcades now.

TEKKEN 4



- 2001/2
- Arcade/PS2 later
- The latest (and greatest) instalment in Namco's long-running series. What it lacks in imagination it makes up for with some exceptionally polished gameplay. Destructible scenery and cussed arenas also spice things up.

SOUL CALIBUR II



- 2002
- Arcade
- The arcade sequel to Namco's magnificent *Soul Calibur* was reviewed in last month's issue of **games™** where it earned a healthy eight out of ten. Expect improved home conversions to arrive early in the New Year.

VIRTUA FIGHTER



- 1993
- Arcade, Saturn
- Whilst SEGA's game was essentially still working on a 2D axis, the 3D visuals set a depressing trend, which inevitably led to the sidelining of traditional 2D fighting games. Admittedly, it did herald a new wave of one-on-one fighters.

TEKKEN



- 1994
- Arcade, PSone
- Namco answer to SEGA's *Virtua Fighter* series, which featured more characters, better controls and superior visuals (compared to the original *Virtua Fighter*, that is). A swift and extremely accomplished PSone conversion followed.

SF ZERO



- 1995
- Arcade, Saturn, PSone
- A change in direction for the series. The game adopted a slightly cartoon-style look, whilst features such as mid-air blocks and reversals seem to have been ripped from some of Capcom's own *SF* clones.

STREET FIGHTER EX



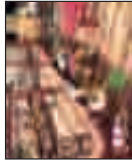
- 1996
- Arcade, PSone
- Capcom and Arka dragged the *Street Fighter* franchise into the third dimension with a mixed degree of success. The gameplay remained more or less intact but the angle of play fighters lacked the charm of their spine-based counterparts.

EHRGEIZ



- 1988
- Arcade, PSone
- Having enjoyed cut successes with the *Tolbi* games, Square and Dream Factory developed a 3D fighter featuring a number of characters from *Final Fantasy VI*. Interesting idea, but unfortunately flawed.

POWER STONE



- 1999
- Arcade, Dreamcast
- Similar to *Ehrgeiz*, but more technically accomplished. Solid controls, interactive 3D arenas and strong character designs made this a favourite. The sequel took things further still with a four-player mode.

THE KING OF FIGHTERS '94



- 1994
- Neo Geo
- Pooling together characters from several of its own games, SNK created the first instalment of what would become one of the most popular 2D fighters of all time. New additions to the series are still released today.

DARK STALKERS



- 1994
- Arcade, Saturn, PSone
- Having churned out a number of *SF* variants, Capcom replaced martial artists with a number of outlandish creatures including a vampire, werewolf and a Frankenstein's monster look-alike. Gained cult status.

CLAYFIGHTERS



- 1994
- Super Nintendo
- *Clayfighters* proved again that the old comedy beat-'em-up genre didn't work. When it was moved to what looked passable, but the charmless characters and stodgy controls made this a chore. Amazingly, an *N64* sequel followed.

BUSHIDO BLADE



- 1997
- PSone
- Going against the grain, this ambitious title dispensed with energy bars as one strike or a sword could kill a body, the likes of which. Sadly, the expansive arenas meant that battles often involved running around with neither combatant fighting.

STAR GLADIATOR



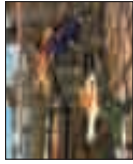
- 1996
- Arcade, PSone
- One of Capcom's earlier ventures into the 3D fight arena. At the time, the game had a certain visual charm but it lacked the sheer gameplay that had made the firm's earlier 2D efforts so popular. Not particularly memorable.

CAPCOM VS SNK



- 2000
- Arcade, PSone, Dreamcast
- The two behemoths of the 2D fighting game collaborated to create a truly remarkable beat-'em-up. Tearing characters from both the Capcom and SNK stables, this was a fight fan's dream come true. The sequel was even better.

CAPCOM FIGHTING ALL STARS



- 2003
- Arcade
- The game is yet to appear in Japanese arcades, but from what we've seen this could be one of Capcom's more accomplished efforts into 3D. Although it hasn't been awarded the possibility of a home conversion is extremely likely.

Developer History

THE OLIVER

Chances are if you owned a computer during the heyday of the 8-bit computer era then you probably purchased at least one game developed by the prolific Oliver twins, Philip and Andrew. The brothers coded a huge number of titles and scored a massive hit with the platform game *Dizzy*. They now head the successful development house Blitz Games.



In 1980, The Oliver twins were introduced to the joys of videogaming through a friend of theirs who was lucky enough to own an Apple IIe ('e' for enhanced) home computer. Having sampled the delights of games such as *Tax-Man* (an unashamed clone of *Pac-Man*) the pair were hooked. Cutting their teeth on systems such as the Sinclair ZX81 and Dragon 32, the brothers started to program their own titles in

Basic and soon secured a number of publishing deals with, among others, Acornsoft, who published their first commercial title.

The twins' big break however came when they met the Darling Brothers at the ECTS of 1985. A deal was agreed upon where the Oliver twins would write a game for Codemasters and receive royalties for each copy sold. The first game developed under this arrangement was *Super Robin Hood* for the Amstrad CPC (later converted to a number of other systems). It proved popular and before long the Oliver twins found themselves inundated with work from Codemasters.

As well as writing a wealth of original titles (including many of the *Simulator* series of games) the twins were asked to port a number of Codemasters titles onto other systems. But in spite of their massive back catalogue, the Oliver twins are

best remembered for introducing gamers to *Dizzy*. The egg-like hero's first game sold well at its budget price of £1.99 and before long gamers were demanding to see more of him. The Oliver twins were happy to oblige and released well over ten sequels that appeared on formats such as the Spectrum, Amstrad, Commodore 64, ST, Amiga, Master System, NES, MegaDrive and Game Boy.

In January 1991 the twins decided to set up their own development firm called Interactive Studios. Together with a team of about 25 programmers and artists, the fledgling developer continued to work with Codemasters on a series of NES titles. Unfortunately, while the NES had enjoyed massive success in the US and Japan, the machine's popularity began to dwindle once the SNES and MegaDrive arrived.

More problematic was that Codemasters's relationship with Nintendo was far from perfect and Nintendo was putting pressure on retailers not to stock the Codies's titles. This naturally had an adverse effect on sales, which in turn meant financial difficulties for Interactive Studios. By November 1993, Interactive Studios broke links with Codemasters and began to work



The Amstrad CPC lacked a decent version of *Pac-Man*, so the twins developed this clone. Amazingly, the game was programmed in about three weeks.



The twins' Amstrad CPC conversion of *Fruit Machine Simulator* proved popular despite criticism that you couldn't win any money on the game. No, really.

BLITZ GAMES...

We take a look at some of the games that helped the twins get a foothold in the industry and eventually saw them rise to stardom. Of course, there are too many to cover over just two pages so in a future issue we'll be giving them more space, especially those much-loved *Dizzy* games.

BLACK BOX AND GAMBIT

Publisher: **Acornsoft**
Format: **BBC Micro Model B**
Year: **1984**

These two simplistic strategy games were put together by the brothers as an entry into a competition for a Saturday morning kids TV show called *The Saturday Show*. *Black Box* and *Gambit* won the compo and earned the twins a Commodore monitor (which they still use today). More importantly, the game was signed up by Acornsoft and released on the BBC Microcomputer. While it only sold in modest numbers, the brothers had gained an entry into the industry.



CAVEY

Publisher: **Players**
Format: **BBC Micro Model B**
Year: **1984**

Inspired by the success of *Space Invaders*, the brothers created their first arcade-style game. You controlled a caveman whose job was to hurl spears at overhead pterodactyls that were dropping rocks on you. In addition to dodging said rocks you also had to keep an eye out for your own spears (as the laws of gravity dictate: what goes up must come down). We will not herald this as one of the greatest games ever developed, but at the time we enjoyed it. Come to think of it, what did happen to the caveman game genre? Answers on a postcard please...



SUPER ROBIN HOOD

Publisher: **Codemasters**
Format: **Amstrad CPC (first), Spectrum, Commodore 64, Atari ST, Amiga, NES**
Year: **1985**

Following a meeting with the Darling Brothers at the 1985 ECTS, the Oliver twins were commissioned by the Darlings to work on a game called *Super Robin Hood* for the Amstrad CPC. Working almost around the clock (taking it in turns to program on the one computer they owned) the twins completed the project and it went on to enjoy great success. The games™ jury is still out on the cover art, though...



DIZZY

Publisher: **Codemasters**
Format: **Amstrad CPC (first), Spectrum, Commodore 64**
Year: **1986**

This was the one that really put the Oliver twins on the map. Admittedly, the concept of an egg (sporting boxing gloves, of all things) roaming around a series of locations may not sound like ideal material for a classic videogame, but this was an absolute blinder. The subsequent release of sequels and spin-offs such as *Treasure Island Dizzy* and *Dizzy Panic!* soon gained the eggish hero near legendary status. There's still nothing quite so heartbreaking as the broken shell and dripping yolk of a dying Dizzy.





At just £1.99 *Dizzy* was a real bargain and rightfully the series enjoyed great success. A huge amount of sequels followed and the character is still fondly remembered by gamers today.

almost exclusively on porting other people's games onto various systems. The lack of creativity in doing this disappointed the twins, but eventually they won the contract to develop an original game (*Firo & Klawd*) for the PlayStation and PC. Following this, Interactive Studios won the contract to work on the game of the popular *WarGames* movie.

The firm later changed its name to Blitz Games and today the brothers oversee the business and development side of things, rather than programming the games themselves. Recent Blitz Games

releases include *Fusion Frenzy*, *Taz: Wanted* and Disney's *Lilo & Stitch*.

By their own admission the twins have seen some low points during their career, but things look to be back on track. The question is: will we see *Dizzy* making a comeback? We'll just have to wait and see...



Super Robin Hood gave you the chance to 'be' Nottingham's finest folk hero. Green tights and a band of Merry Men were entirely optional.

Q & A WITH PHILIP OLIVER (CO-FOUNDER OF BLITZ GAMES)

As one half of the Oliver twins, Philip Oliver knows a thing or two about the games industry. And he's met Jeremy Beadle. Impressed? You should be...

WHICH ONE VIDEOGAME WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE CREATED AND WHY?

It's difficult to pick out any one game because it'd probably be a different one in each era. The first one out would be *Pac-Man* because it was just such an elegant and compulsive game – and probably the first with a character and personality. In the Spectrum days it was probably games like *Head Over Heels* or *Knight Lore* just because they were getting more out of the machine than seemed possible. Later, in the MegaDrive days it would have to be the first *Sonic* game – it was just so fluid, so fast and such a brilliant stylised look compared to anything else that had come before. After that it'd have to be some of Rare's mid-Nineties output like *Donkey Kong* and *Banjo-Kazooie* because at that time they really had the knack of creating such incredibly full and vibrant worlds that really made the N64 shine, and they never forgot the gameplay either. There are, of course, many, many more...

WHAT'S YOUR BEST MEMORY OF WORKING IN THE VIDEOGAME INDUSTRY?

Probably our early days of making Spectrum games. Knowing that whatever we produced would go on sale the following month and go straight to number one was a fantastic incentive to keep going and keep improving. They were exciting times, and much simpler times.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE BEING DESCRIBED AS WHIZZ-KIDS? DID ALL THE FAME GO TO YOUR HEAD?

It was pretty weird at first but in the very early days it was largely just the local papers in Wiltshire that were picking up the story. It was only after we were on *The Saturday Show* for winning a game design competition that the whole whizz-kid thing kicked off. We certainly weren't the only 15-year-old programmers that were doing well and earning loads of money at the time, but we never really fell into the camp of showing off by buying fast cars or the like. I think we kept our feet fairly well on the ground.

ANY GOOD ANECDOTES ABOUT THE SATURDAY SHOW AND ITS HOST, JEREMY BEADLE?

Two slightly odd moments – the first was while we were filming as the Harlem Globe Trotters were charging round the studio playing basketball in and around the cameras, and the second was when we were in the bar afterwards with Gary Numan. At one point we all looked out of the window into the courtyard below to see hundreds of Gary Numan look-alikes crowding outside. Very surreal.

PROFESSIONAL SKI SIMULATOR

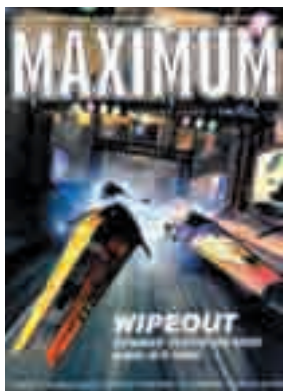
Publisher: **Codemasters**
Format: **Amstrad CPC (first), Spectrum, Commodore 64, Atari ST, Amiga**
Year: **1986**

The brothers had taken a shine to the Atari coin-op *Marble Madness* and used the basic structure of this game to create an enjoyable if slightly flawed ski title (the idea came about

following a skiing trip to Austria). A somewhat suspect control system disappointed, but the game's low price and generally high quality ensured that the twins had another hit on their hands.



Incredible Shrinking Sphere (ISS) borrowed heavily from *Marble Madness*. The brothers ported the C64 game to the Amstrad and Spectrum for Electric Dreams using a pseudonym to avoid wrangling with Codemasters.



CLASSIC MAGAZINES

This month we look back at what can truly be described as a 'hard-core' videogames magazine.

MAXIMUM

The term 'hard-core gamer' gets on our nerves a bit. As far as we're concerned, if you don't think *ico* is 'the greatest game ever made' then you're not going to burn in hell. And so what if you like a bit of *FIFA* – gaming is about having fun, isn't it? However, in the case of multiformat *Maximum* magazine, the only apt description is that it was 'a hard-core videogame mag for hard-core gamers'. In issue one the team devoted an astonishing 11 pages to *Street Fighter Alpha: Warriors' Dreams* (the arcade version, that is) and nine pages to the little known Neo Geo beat-'em-up *Kabuki Klash: Far East of Eden*. Remember – the magazine launched at the same time as the Saturn and PSone, so the team's reluctance to provide blanket coverage of these new systems was laudable (if perhaps misguided).

The sheer passion, enthusiasm and depth on offer here was enough to earn the mag a loyal readership. Sadly, but not completely surprisingly, *Maximum* only lasted seven issues. In the words of Eldon Tyrell: "The light that burns twice as

DON'T GO CHANGING

This month we take a look at SEGA's quirky Mega Drive platformer *Magical Flying Hat Turbo Adventure*, and how it was transformed into *Decap-Attack* for Western audiences.

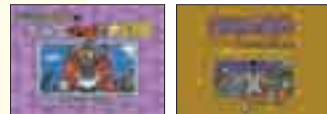
DECAP-ATTACK

If you owned a Mega Drive and were up on the import gaming scene back in 1990, then there's a good chance that you may remember a rather enjoyable platform title by the name of *Magical Flying Hat Turbo Adventure* (MFHTA from now on). The game, while hardly a classic, was surprisingly playable and saw you controlling a cutesy central character who could throw around his egg-like buddy to attack enemies. The vibrant anime visuals also lent the game a certain charm. Naturally, back in those days SEGA were still a little wary about releasing leftfield titles in the West. Given that the Mega Drive/Genesis was performing better in Europe and the US than in its native Japan, the firm decided that MFHTA should be given an overhaul to endear it to overseas gamers. Consequently, in 1991 the

Western market received the horrifically named *Decap-Attack* starring... Chuck D. Head (great gag, guys).

The game was essentially a level-for-level remake of MFHTA, but now the hilariously-named hero (obviously designed to appeal to US gamers) was a mummified corpse with a face in his chest and you had to explore a number of comedy horror worlds. The egg of the Japanese game had been replaced with a detachable skull that could be thrown about and the Japanese enemies were swapped for more Westernised foes. Fortunately, apart from the slightly tragic Americanisation of plot and graphics, the game itself remained intact. Next month we look at the debacle that was *Street Combat* on the SNES – a truly shameful adaptation of the *Ranma 1/2* game on the Super Famicom.

In terms of layout these two title screens (*Decap* is obviously on the right) share key similarities, although the graphics and text have clearly been changed.



In the Japanese game (above) our hero could punch foes, in the Western version (top) Chuck's chest-based face was used for such short-range strikes.

VIDEOGAMES

ATTACK OF THE MUTANT ZOMBIE FLESH EATING CHICKENS FROM MARS

When adverts began to

Whatever happened to this Matthew Smith game?



appear for a game called *Attack Of The Mutant Zombie Flesh Eating Chickens From Mars*, the gaming world stood up and took notice...

As the programmer of *Styx*, *Manic Miner* and, of course, *Jet Set Willy*, Matthew Smith was a coding superstar. Yet after the massive success of the *Manic Miner* titles Smith all but disappeared from the videogame scene. Then it was announced that he was working on a number of new releases. There

was *Footy*, an overhead football simulation, and the much talked about *Miner Willy Meets The Taxman* (or *MegaTree* (*Manic Miner* III)). The former did get beyond the design stages but the latter never got off the drawing board (although copies of level designs are said to exist).

More curious, however, was *Attack Of The Mutant Zombie Flesh Eating Chickens From Mars* starring Zappo the Dog. Adverts for the game appeared during mid-1987. Smith was

writing the game for the Spectrum while another programmer was working on a C64 variant called *Star Paws*. AOTMZFEFCM never saw the light of day, but *Star Paws* (featuring Rover Pawstrong) was finished and converted to the Spectrum. The side-scrolling adventure, although quite limited, offers a tantalising glimpse of what Smith may have had in mind for AOTMZFEFCM, but we may never know the whole truth about those chickens.



Notice the similarity between Rover Pawstrong and Zappo the Dog.



Star Paws as it appeared on the Spectrum in 1988.

These ads appeared throughout the summer of 1987.

S·P·E·E·D·B·A·L·L II: B·R·U·T·A·L D·E·L·U·X·E

BACK IN 1990, THE CRY OF "ICE CREAM, ICE CREAM" HAD A SINISTER OVERTONE TO IT...

Borrowing heavily from Norman Jewison's pompous 1975 flick *Rollerball*, the original *Speedball* from legendary coders The Bitmap Brothers was a futuristic team sports game in which kicking the hell out of your opponents was just as important (or at least as satisfying) as scoring goals. Its mix of fast-paced play, extreme violence and management elements deservedly made it one of the most popular titles of its day.

However, two years down the line the highly anticipated sequel came along and completely tore up the rulebook – not that there were too many rules in the first game. *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe*

took the key elements that had made its predecessor so great and then chucked in a plethora of new features to spice things up. The graphics were better (they still had the Bitmap Brothers's highly stylised metallic look to them), the playing area was bigger (the cramped arenas of the original had come in for some criticism) and the action itself was faster and more aggressive.

In one-player mode it was your task to take Brutal Deluxe (a no-hoper team of thugs) through a series of league, cup and knockout competitions. This was all good fun, but the real pleasure was to be had in the exceptionally addictive two-player mode. With two equally-matched players going at it, games could become impossibly competitive – to a point where blows were being landed both on the screen and off it.

So what made the game so good? Essentially the gameplay

remained true to that of the original – namely, two teams of armour-clad players attempting to outscore one another. The inclusion of two ramp-like score multipliers was the real stroke of genius, however. By rolling your ball up these, the value of any subsequent points you scored was increased. If a team did this twice then point values went through the roof. Fortunately, the effects of this could be nullified if the opposition rolled the ball back up the ramp. What this led to was a series of brutal challenges being exchanged around the multipliers, with neither team wanting to let the other get away with an advantage.

Furthermore, an electroball unit allowed you to turn the ball into a formidable weapon for a limited time (canny players linked this with the multiplier for added effect). Best of all, if a particular player took too much of a drubbing he keeled over and was unceremoniously removed

by two robotic stretcherbearers, all to the immortal sound of an off-screen vendor yelling "ice cream, ice cream". As playable today as it was on its release, *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* is a masterclass in great game design. Just don't get us started on the abomination that was *Speedball 2100...*

Speedball Arena is currently being developed by The Bitmap Brothers for a number of next generation platforms. Expect a release later this year.

Format(s): Amiga/Atari ST (first), PC, C64, NES, Master System, Mega Drive, Game Boy, CD32, Game Boy Advance
Publisher: Image Works
Developer: The Bitmap Brothers
Price: £24.99
Release date: November 1990

Greatest
RETRO
Game
Ever

As you progressed through the ranks it was possible to bolster your squad's ability and dabble in the transfer market.

Defeating reigning champions Super Nashwan required a mixture of skill, cunning and extreme violence.

SHOOTING STARS

Unlike the first game, points could be amassed not only by slamming the metallic ball into your opponent's goal, but also by hitting stars located on the arena walls. If you could illuminate a row of these then yet more bonus points were awarded. Sounds easy in theory, but when opposing players were kicking the hell out of you, aiming accurately became that little bit trickier.

Retro

GAME OVER

THE GREATEST (AND THE NOT SO GREATEST) GAME ENDINGS EVER

Most of us can recall the intro sequences from our favourite games, but the endings are quite a different matter. For instance, what happened when you completed *The New Zealand Story*? Who was the last boss in *Final Fight*? And what happened to Jessica? We take a look at some lesser-spotted closing sequences and evaluate them based on how clichéd they were. In order to do this, we've used the patented "Guy saves the world, gets the girl and walks off into the sunset" rating system, otherwise known as "GSTWGTGAWOITS". Variants of this system include "Kiwi saves the world, gets the bird (literally) and walks off into the sunset", otherwise known as "KSTWGTBAWOITS". We trust you can work out the others for yourselves.

SUPER MARIO WORLD

Format: Super Nintendo

Having destroyed each of the castles, Mario finally comes face-to-face with, and defeats, the mighty Bowser. After whupping his foe, Mario is reunited with the love of his life, Princess Daisy. And then it's off on holiday for a bit of a knees-up with Yoshi and his friends. Who says there's no such thing as a happy ending?

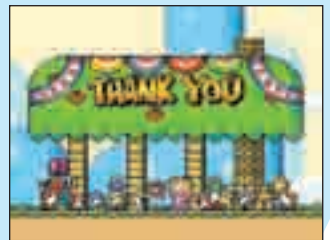


It would make sense for Mario and Daisy to move into one of Bowser's castles. Obviously, it'd need a bit of renovating but it would be a great project.

Bowser's a positively friendly face compared to the leering, gurning face of that clown contraption. Finally, people seem to be realising that clowns aren't funny. You might as well have axe murderers running around at the circus.



THE END



What's the situation with Mario, Daisy and Luigi? It's either a bit sordid or Luigi just doesn't realise when it's time to leave the lovebirds to it.

GSTWGTGAWOITS: 8/10
No sunset, but all the other requisite factors are present.

THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI

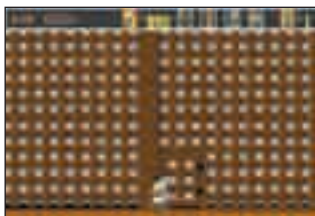
Format: **MegaDrive**

This game had the bonus of two (count 'em) endings depending on how quickly you defeated the head of the Neo Zeed Corporation. If you did it in time you saved your girlfriend from being crushed to death by a descending ceiling in the background; cue a soppy scene with our hero and his girl standing arm-in-arm, staring at the sunset. Take too long though, and the girl gets flattened, leading to a heart-wrenching scene showing your lonesome character staring into the night sky where an image of his deceased lady friend materialises.



ABOVE: You did it! The lovely floaty-skirted lady is yours. BELOW: You fool! She died because you were too slow. We hope you feel bad about that.

NSTWGTGAWOITS
Good Ending: 10/10
Every cliché present and correct.



NSTWGTGAWOITS
Bad Ending: 3/10
World saved but no sunset or girl.

THE SIMPSONS

Format: **Arcade**

Having battled through the bizarre denizens of Springfield, your last task was to give the money-grabbing Mr Burns a good drubbing. Once the scheming millionaire had finally keeled over, young Maggie crawls up



to the comatose tycoon and sticks her pacifier in his open mouth.

With that done the now reunited dysfunctional family call it a day and head off home, seemingly unphased by the hectic events of the day. But then you'd expect nothing less from this lot.



DFSTWGTAWOITS: 5/10
If you consider rescuing an infant baby to be "getting the girl" then you may have problems.

Is it us, or does it look like Marge is being violently ill in that middle picture? No, wait, she's standing next to a Hoover, isn't she? First person to sort this out wins, erm, the respect of their peers.



KUNG-FU MASTER



The Devil's Temple is populated by the campest martial arts warriors known to man. Look at him on the left - he'll scratch your eyes out...

Format: **Arcade**

Making your way through the five floors of the Devil's Temple was no easy task but, having defeated Mr X, Thomas is finally reunited with the love of his life, Silvia. Off she leaps from her chair and we see the happy couple sharing a loving embrace. Sadly, as the game informs you, this happiness does not last long and before you know it you're back on level one going through the whole thing again. Only things start getting tougher this time round...

KFMSTWGTGAWOITS: 5/10
Girl-saving ahoj here, but a serious sunset and world-saving deficit lets things down.

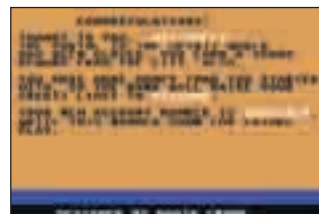


Thanks to shoddy punctuation, it sounds like Thomas, Silvia and a Kung-Fu master enjoyed happiness together. How terribly Bohemian.

GHOSTBUSTERS

Format: **Commodore 64**

Despite an awesome Mr Stay Puft sequence (where you had to dodge past him), the end battle was something of a letdown. Having completed the game by closing the portal to the spirit world, your reward was a lousy bit of text telling you that you'd been awarded some money as a bonus. You did get a new account number for the next time you played, so it wasn't all bad news - but still a bit lame. No girl? No sunset? Rubbish.



PISTWGTGAWOITS: 2/10
No sign of Sigourney Weaver, no sunset, but yes the world had been saved.

GAME OVER

GHOULS 'N GHOSTS

Format: **Arcade**

Capcom's classic coin-op was one of the trickiest titles of its day (of all time, for that matter). Making matters worse was the fact that in order to reach the final boss, Lucifer, players had to go through the whole game twice – there were no namby-pamby saves in those days, so this had to be done in one sitting. As it turned out, Old Nick wasn't too tough to defeat and, having blown him back to hell, the trapped souls of your village folk were freed. Shortly afterwards, a bird drops down the Princess of Hus, who looks as though she is dead (gasp). Fortunately, her spirit returns to her body and up she gets, but the final screen confirms that Arthur's troubles are far from behind him; a knight's work is never done.



All that armour isn't particularly romantic. After 30 minutes with a tin-opener and a welding mask the moment's pretty much lost, isn't it?

KOOSTWGTPAWOITS: 7/10
Arthur gets the girl, but the world hadn't been completely saved just yet.



THE NEW ZEALAND STORY

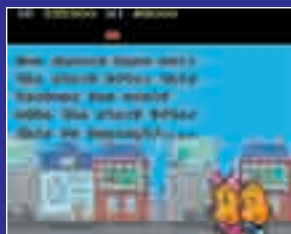
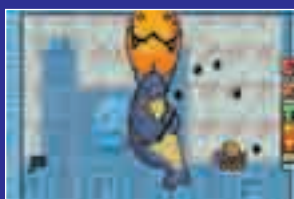
Format: **Arcade**

The cute graphics of this classic Taito coin-op misled many into thinking the game would be a walk in the park. It wasn't. Before Tiki could be reunited with his beloved partner Phee-Phee and the rest of his Kiwi friends he had to defeat the huge leopard seal that guarded the final stage. Once he'd gone you were given a recap of how the whole adventure had started and were shown a nice image of Tiki and his gal. A sweet end to a sweet game and if you want to mock us for that last comment then go right ahead.



Possibly the greatest love story since *Romeo And Juliet*. And this is better because Tiki and Phee-Phee are just so dam cute.

KSWGTBAWOITS: 7/10
Tiki gets the girl, the sun is shining and, to all intents and purposes, everything is well in the world.



Thank you for playing.

See you again.



FINAL FIGHT



Format: **Arcade**

Having fought through the various members of the criminal outfit known as Mad Gear (this, incidentally, was the name of an earlier Capcom coin-op) the only thing that stood between you and Jessica was Belger, the wheelchair-bound head of the organisation. Having delivered the coup de grace, the boss is smashed through a window where he plummets to his death. All is not well though – clearly Guy wants Jessica to be more than just a friend. What results is a scuffle between him and Cody and a final scene where Cody tells Jessica he can't stay with her because there's still crime to fight. As we later discovered in *Street Fighter Alpha 3*, Cody would take the crime-fighting thing a bit too far and eventually end up doing time for brawling (but that's another story).



GSTWGTGAWOITS: 2/10
Squabbling among friends and the girl gets left on her lonesome – hardly the stuff of Mills and Boon.

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION



This title was fiendishly difficult but it looks like you've got a respite here – nothing too taxing about running down a corridor is there? Or is there?



That Alvin Atombender's a nasty piece of work. But when you're born with a name like Atombender you've got no option but to become an evil scientist.

Format: Commodore 64

If ever a game had an apt title then this was it. Epyx's *Impossible Mission* was indeed impossibly difficult, but the cackling of the evil Alvin Atombender kept everyone coming back for just one more go. Remember, this was a Commodore 64 game and flashy end sequences were still the stuff of a madman's dreams in those days. So not much of an ending then really, but we'll forgive this one anything just for the immortal line: "Another visitor, stay a while, stay forever". The term: "Destroy him my robots" still sends a shiver down our spines as well.

SASWGTGAWOITS: 3/10
No girl, no sunset, but yes the world had been saved.

BUBBLE BOBBLE

Format: Arcade

Now this one really sorted the men from boys. Unless you invested a great deal of time (and money) in the game you probably never got to see the endings. There were three in total, but to view the one shown here you had to play the game in Super Bubble Bobble mode (an explanation of how to do this may come in future issues). Having defeated Super Drunk, our heroes Bub and Bob (spiritual predecessors of Ant and Dec, because they got everywhere but no-one knew which was which (Bub was the green one, fact fans)) not only transformed back into their human form, but also rescued their girlfriends and their parents. You were then treated to what was, quite literally, a happy ending.

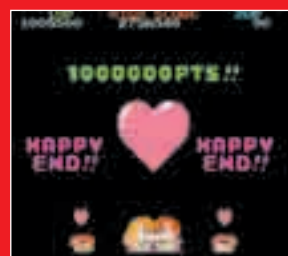
DSTWGTGAWOITS: 7/10
Girls saved, parents saved and everyone lives happily ever after.



What Mam doesn't know is that Papa used to have a distinguished career in Danish porn. You'd have thought the moustache would have been a giveaway...



Oh, right – that's cleared that up then. Nothing like an air of mystery to spoil a happy ending.



Just in case your brain is worn out after the exertion of the game, all subtlety is abandoned.

CONTRA III: THE ALIEN WARS

Format: SNES (US)

For many, this was *the* definitive instalment of Konami's celebrated *Contra* series. After they'd blown away the alien brain that lurked at the end of the game, Lance and Bill were whisked to safety by a helicopter and eventually dropped off in the middle of an adoring crowd of admirers. They may have been hard-as-you-like soldiers of fortune (or something along those lines), but the final screen proves that the two of them scrub up rather well. Bill's suit is particularly eye-catching. No sign of a girl though...



So much for walking off into the sunset with the girl – these two are off to the showers for some manly chat, towel-flicking and, um, spirited horseplay.



I'm sure a peaceful time will come, but you might want to get rid of the toiled-up helicopter and the bravmy fella with the big gun first.



HANSSWGTGAWOITS: 3/10
Saved the world they might have, but these two seem to be more interested in each other than young ladies – that's the military for you.

SAM FOX STRIP POKER

Format: Spectrum

Gratuitous End Game Sequence Showing A Woman With Her Breasts Exposed. Sorry.

GSWGTGAWOITS: N/A
Erm...



:Cough, splutter, choke: We're terribly sorry, we really don't know how this got in here. You just sit tight and we'll go and make sure it doesn't happen again...

C·L·A·S·S·I·C C·O·N·S·O·L·E·S

B·U·Y·E·R·S G·U·I·D·E

I'D BUY THAT FOR A DOLLAR

Here's a basic list of the more popular games machines that people are collecting. The prices shown are a rough estimate of what you should be paying for a decent condition machine in its original box, with little or no software. Obviously, though, prices can vary dramatically.

3DO

Panasonic 3DO	£60
Goldstar 3DO	£50-60

ACORN COMPUTERS

BBC Micro	£50
Acorn Electron	£40

AMSTRAD

Amstrad CPC 464	£20
Amstrad CPC 664	£20-25
Amstrad CPC 6128	£25
Amstrad GX4000	£50

ATARI

Atari VCS 2600	£30 (wooden models tend to cost more)
Atari ST	£40 (with software)
Atari Lynx	£35 (the streamlined model costs more)
Atari Jaguar	£25

COMMODORE

Commodore Vic 20	£15-20
Commodore 64	£25-35 (varies according to model)
Commodore Amiga	£35-40 (varies according to model)
Commodore CDTV	£50-60
C64GS	£50 (becoming more sought-after)
Commodore CD32	£35

MISC

GCE Vectrex (General Consumer Electronics)	£200-250
MB Vectrex (Milton Bradley)	£175-200
JAMMA compatible cabinets	£100-350 (depending on model)
Supergun	£150-200 (varies according to model)

NEC

PC Engine	£70-80
Turbo Grafx-16	£50-60
Turbo Duo	£100-150
PC Engine GT	£150-200
Super Grafx	£200-250

NINTENDO

Game & Watch	£15-50 (depending on title)
Nintendo Entertainment System	£15-20
Game Boy/Game Boy Pocket	£10
Game Boy Color	£15
Super Nintendo	£20-25
Virtual Boy	£75-100
Nintendo 64	£20-25

SEGA

Master System	£20
MegaDrive	£20-25
Game Gear	£20-25
Mega CD	£40-60
SEGA 32X	£30
SEGA Nomad	£75-100
SEGA Saturn	£30
Dreamcast	£25-30

SINCLAIR

Sinclair ZX-81	£40
ZX Spectrum 48K	£40-50
ZX Spectrum +	£30
ZX Spectrum 128K	£40
ZX Spectrum +2	£35
ZX Spectrum +3	£40

SNK

Neo Geo MVS Single Slot (Arcade system)	£70 (prices for multi-slots are higher)
Neo Geo AES (home system)	£175-225
Neo Geo CD	£125-175
Neo Geo CDZ	£150-175
Neo Geo Pocket	£25-30

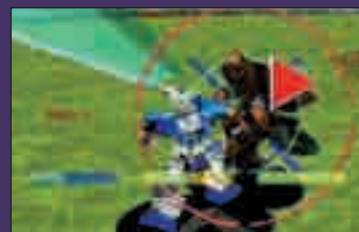
SYSTEMS

SEGA SATURN



RECOMMENDED PRICE:

£25-35 for PAL machine, £60-70 for switched machine



The machine's strength lay in producing fabulous 2D visuals, but it could still knock out some decent 3D titles, including this conversion of *Virtual On*.

VIRTUAL BOY



RECOMMENDED PRICE:

£75-100

A most peculiar console from Nintendo. The Virtual Boy was designed by the late Gunpei Yokoi who, among other things, had previously given the world the all-conquering Game Boy. Sadly, the machine proved that even giants such as Nintendo are prone to the odd slip-up. The console itself was billed as a pseudo Virtual Reality system, with an odd LCD screen that the user viewed through a goggle-like device.

Unfortunately, the monochrome red

With its Saturn console, SEGA effectively brought a knife to a gunfight. The problem was that the machine had been designed as a 2D powerhouse at a time when the industry was embracing 3D. Consequently, as tech specs for Sony's forthcoming PlayStation began to trickle through, SEGA panicked and attempted to beef up the machine's architecture. Thus the Saturn's 3D capabilities became more than a match for Sony's system, but the bottlenecks created by the redesigned chip set made the Saturn unpopular with many third-party (as well as SEGA's) developers.

That said, the machine (which took a commercial pounding from the PSone) is still loved by loyal SEGA fans. Only the Neo Geo boasts a better collection of 2D beat-'em-ups (but only just). Fine conversions such as *SEGA Rally* and *Elevator Action Returns*, and original games like *Guardian Heroes*, have secured the machine's

FIVE RECOMMENDED GAMES

- Radiant Silvergun
- Fighters Megamix
- Ages (includes a fine conversion of Out Run)
- Panzer Dragoon Saga
- Athlete Kings



near legendary status among gamers in the know.

SOFTWARE

Most PAL titles can be picked up for less than a tenner, some for as little as £2.99. But if you're after rare classics like Treasure's fantastic shoot-'em-up *Radiant Silvergun* (Japanese release only) then you could be looking at shelling out up to £160-170.

WHERE TO LOOK

UK machines can be picked up for next to nothing (second-hand software stores and eBay are your best bet), whilst modified 'switched' consoles that allow you to play games from all regions can be acquired for about £60-70. If you don't already own one, then you really should track down a Saturn and buy it.

BBC MICRO MODEL B



RECOMMENDED PRICE:
£40-50 depending on model and condition

Although the Acorn-developed computer was widely regarded as the system for 'posh' kids with over-enthusiastic parents, the machine actually played host to some exceptionally well-crafted software including, among others, the original version of *Elite* and *Aviator*, a technically impressive flight sim from a young Geoff Crammond.

Designed with an eye on the seemingly lucrative education market, the machine's relatively high launch price of £399 ensured that rival (and, crucially, cheaper) platforms such as the ZX Spectrum appealed to a broader market. The computer came in several different flavours, although the most successful was the BBC Microcomputer Model B.

While it lacked the diversity in software of contemporaries such as the C64 and ZX Spectrum, a number of publishers including Acornsoft, Superior Software and MicroPower ensured that the system was supported with some fantastic releases. These ranged from unashamed clones of popular arcade

FIVE RECOMMENDED GAMES

- Repton
- Citadel
- Stryker's Run
- Castle Quest
- Planetoid



The BBC could produce detailed and colourful graphics – witness the excellent *Planetoid*.

games (*Snapper*, *Planetoid*) to a clutch of original titles (*Exile*, *Citadel*, *Revs*). The quality keyboard also marked it out as a superior platform.

SOFTWARE

As stated, there are some fine games available for this machine, many of which are exclusive to the system. There's no reason why you should have to pay the earth for older titles, and if you're willing to invest some time in your search then you should be able to pick up some classics for less than a tenner.

WHERE TO LOOK

Your first port of call here will probably be eBay as the BBC Micro is not the sort of machine you're likely to find in an independent videogame store. Then, of course, there's our old friend the car boot sale. Prices will vary wildly, but for a Model B in working order you're probably looking at coughing up around £40-50.



The red visuals of the game often made it slightly tricky to determine what was going on, as *Galactic Pinball* illustrates with aplomb.

images that greeted the player rapidly induced headaches and general feelings of nausea. Worse still, the games themselves (and there weren't many) were largely simplistic affairs (fishing or boxing titles, for example) that lacked the oomph of Nintendo's finer creations.

The machine didn't fare well in Japan and wasn't even released in the UK. That said, in the seven years since its release the Virtual Boy has become increasingly collectable and if you own one we'd advise you to hang onto it as the machine is only likely to increase in value over the coming years. Although it may not appeal to everyone, those in search of one of gaming's more unusual

FIVE RECOMMENDED GAMES

- Mario Clash
- Teleroboxer
- Galactic Pinball
- Mario Tennis
- Virtual Fishing



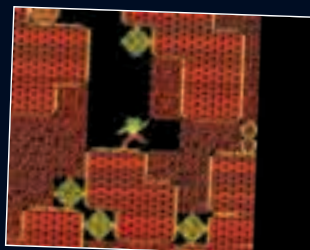
creations would do well to look around for a Virtual Boy.

SOFTWARE

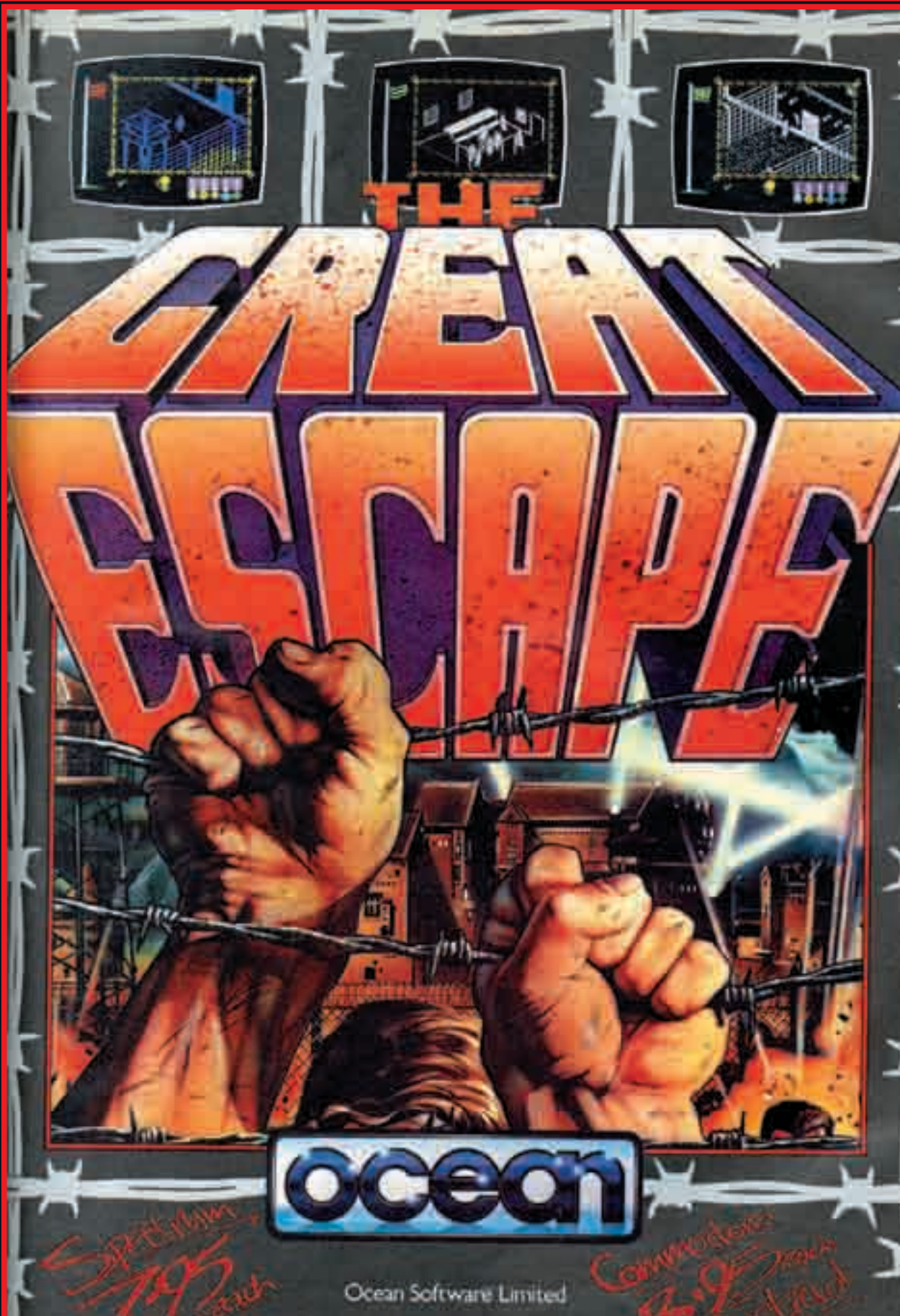
As far as the Virtual Boy was concerned, quality releases were fairly thin on the ground, but Mario aficionados will probably want to get their hands on *Mario Tennis* and *Mario Clash*. Expect to pay somewhere in the region of £30 for most of the software, although this will vary depending on the title.

WHERE TO LOOK

As always, eBay is a good place to start, but many independent specialist videogame outlets often have a few Virtual Boys for sale. In terms of price, a boxed unit in good condition is likely to set you back at least £100, but determined collectors have stumbled upon the system for less than this.



Repton is one of the most fondly remembered titles on the machine. A number of sequels followed.



THE GREAT ESCAPE (Spectrum 48K/C64/Amstrad CPC464) Advert first appeared in *Crash* magazine, November 1986



ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY THOUGH, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE...

PLAYSTATION2

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER

Sony

UK LAUNCH DATE

24 November 2000

MEDIA

4.75-inch DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE

£169.99

The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's headstart over both the GameCube and Xbox. With support across the board from third-party developers, a built-in DVD player and backward compatibility with older PSone games, it's the most popular videogame console available today.



TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE PLAYSTATION2 GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Ico	SCEE	In-House
2	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Take 2	Rockstar
3	TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Free Radical
4	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	Neversoft
5	Pro Evolution 2	Konami	In-House
6	Burnout 2	Acclaim	Criterion
7	Devil May Cry	Capcom	In-House
8	Rez	SEGA	UGA
9	Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters	In-House
10	Kingdom Hearts	SCEE	Squaresoft
11	Sky Odyssey	Sony	Cross
12	Final Fantasy X	SCEE	Squaresoft
13	Capcom VS SNK 2	Capcom	In-House
14	Ape Escape 2	Sony	In-House
15	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	Io Interactive
16	Project Zero	Wanadoo	Tecmo
17	Marvel VS Capcom 2	Capcom	In-House
18	Shinobi	SEGA	OverWorks
19	Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	IMPORT Konami	In-House
20	Legaia 2: Duel Saga	Eidos	Prokion

VIEWPOINT

GTA: VICE CITY

You won't sway us – it's a really great game, but no amount of nagging will make us admit that it's the best game on the PS2 at the moment. Of course, that might be because the game wiped over our virtually complete save file without any provocation. Git.



VIEWPOINT

CAPCOM VS SNK 2

Yes, we're huge fans of Capcom's seminal *StreetFighter* series... so sue us. Surprisingly though, this cross-over is easily one of our favourites so far – even more so than the over-the-top *Marvel Vs Capcom 2*. Maybe it's thanks to our soft spot for good old SNK.



VIEWPOINT

BURNOUT 2

It may still be fairly new but Criterion has produced a racer strong enough to topple even *Gran Turismo 3* from the top spot. High-speed thrills and spills are the order of the day here – not one for those who suffer from motion sickness.



VIEWPOINT

LEGAIA 2: DUEL SAGA

Fresh Games has been bringing us quirky Japanese games for some time now, but this sleeper RPG was a wonderful surprise. Epic, ingenious and thoroughly enjoyable, *Legaia 2* is an incredibly deep roleplayer that will probably last you until *Final Fantasy X-2*.





GAMECUBE

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER

Nintendo

UK LAUNCH DATE

3 May 2002

MEDIA

3-inch Optical Disc

CURRENT PRICE

£129.99

Although it's the cheapest machine on the market, Nintendo's newest console shouldn't be underestimated. The firm's long-established experience in games means that the GameCube can expect to see many quality first- and third-party games in the future. Primarily a games machine, the GameCube has no DVD function.



TOP TWENTY MUSTHAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Metroid Prime	IMPORT Nintendo	In-House
2	Super Monkey Ball 2	IMPORT SEGA	Amusement Vision
3	Animal Crossing	IMPORT Nintendo	In-House
4	TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Free Radical
5	Super Mario Sunshine	Nintendo	In-House
6	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	Neversoft
7	Eternal Darkness	Nintendo	Silicon Knights
8	Resident Evil	Capcom	In-House
9	Mario Party 4	Nintendo	Hudson
10	StarFox Adventures	Nintendo	Rare
11	Star Wars: Rogue Leader	Activision	Factor 5
12	Bomberman Generation	IMPORT Majesco	Hudson
13	SEGA Soccer Slam	SEGA	Black Box
14	Super Monkey Ball	SEGA	Amusement Vision
15	Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	Z-Axis
16	Doshin The Giant	Nintendo	In-House
17	Super Smash Brothers Melee	Nintendo	In-House
18	Virtua Striker 3 ver.2002	SEGA	Amusement Vision
19	Pikmin	Nintendo	In-House
20	Beach Spikers	SEGA	AM2

VIEWPOINT

ANIMAL CROSSING

Not a single day has gone by since we bought our copies of *Animal Crossing* that we haven't played it – yes, it's that compulsive. Considering the game is supposed to have a lifespan of 30 years, it looks like we'll be playing it for a long time to come...



VIEWPOINT

RESIDENT EVIL

Zombies, argghh. It's no shock to see that Capcom's remake of the essential Survival Horror game has sold more than its fair share of GameCubes, which can only be a good thing. Seeing as we've now got our hands on *RE Zero* though, it's becoming a distant memory...



VIEWPOINT

DOSHIN THE GIANT

If you're one of those people who overlooked the adventures of this huge yellow man, then you've missed out on something special. It might not look like much but, like *Animal Crossing*, *Doshin* offers a playing experience like nothing you've ever seen before.



VIEWPOINT

BOMBERMAN GENERATION

We've been enjoying blowing each other up for months now, thanks to the joys of import gaming... but seeing as Vivendi slipped it onto the shelves just before Christmas without telling anyone, you can too. Yay.



ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY THOUGH, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE...

XBOX

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER

Microsoft

UK LAUNCH DATE

13 March 2002

MEDIA

4.75-inch DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE

£159.99

Despite a slow start, the Xbox is swiftly becoming one of the major players in today's console market. Suggestions that the machine is only a 'PC in a box' are founded upon the built-in hard drive, broadband support and DVD player. However, the Xbox is far more accessible to the casual gamer than most PCs.



TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE XBOX GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Halo	Microsoft	Bungie
2	Jet Set Radio Future	SEGA	Smilebit
3	TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Free Radical
4	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	In-House
5	Colin McRae Rally 3	CodeMasters	In-House
6	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	Neversoft
7	Project Gotham Racing	Microsoft	Bizarre Creations
8	Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	Z-Axis
9	Dead Or Alive 3	Microsoft	Tecmo
10	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	Io Interactive
11	Quantum Redshift	Microsoft	Curly Monsters
12	Buffy The Vampire Slayer	EA	In-House
13	Phantom Crash	Phantagram	In-House
14	Blinx: The Time Sweeper	Microsoft	Artoon
15	Outlaw Golf	TDK Mediactive	Hypnotix Inc
16	Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	Activision	HotGen Studios
17	Commandos 2: Men Of Courage	Eidos	In-House
18	ToeJam & Earl III: Mission To Earth	SEGA	TJ&E Productions
19	Transworld Snowboarding	Infogrames	Housemarque
20	House Of The Dead 3	SEGA	WOW Entertainment

VIEWPOINT

JET SET RADIO FUTURE

Seeing as this is one half of the pack that comes free with every Xbox these days, there's no excuse to not play through SEGA's rather amazing cel-shaded skating extravaganza. We've already done it twice and we *still* play it – talk about replay value.



VIEWPOINT

SPLINTER CELL

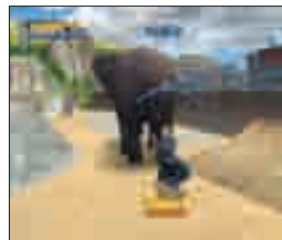
Solid Snake had better be looking over his shoulder when Sam Fisher's around – Ubi Soft's secret agent man is a far better bet if you're looking for a top-notch sneak-'em-up. Now that it's coming to other consoles though, we're even more excited.



VIEWPOINT

TONY HAWK 4

Damn that Tony Hawk, damn him to hell. Just when we thought that we wouldn't have to play through his latest effort (having finished the PS2 version), the Xbox version arrived... and we just had to do it all over again. As if we haven't got enough on our hands.



VIEWPOINT

QUANTUM REDSHIFT

No, it's not as good as *WipeOut* on the PS2, but seeing as the Xbox doesn't have anything like it, we're more than happy to take *Quantum Redshift* instead. Fast, furious and frantic fun – everything you could possibly want from a futuristic racing game. So nerrrr.





GBA

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER

Nintendo

UK LAUNCH DATE

22 June 2001

MEDIA

Flash Cartridge

CURRENT PRICE

£69.99



Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play. The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. No mean feat for such a small machine.

TOP TEN MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Metroid Fusion	Nintendo	In-House
2	Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe	Wanadoo	Crawfish
3	Castlevania: Harmony Of Dissonance	Konami	In-House
4	Golden Sun	Nintendo	Camelot
5	Advance Wars	Nintendo	In-House
6	Street Fighter Alpha 3	Ubi Soft	Crawfish
7	Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island	Nintendo	In-House
8	Pinball Challenge Deluxe	Ubi Soft	Binary 9
9	Sonic Advance	SEGA	Sonic Team
10	Mario Kart: Super Circuit	Nintendo	In-House

VIEWPOINT

CASTLEVANIA: HOD

Okay, so maybe it's not quite as good as *Symphony Of The Night* to some people, but as far as GBA Castlevania games go, *HOD* is easily the best one around.



VIEWPOINT

PINBALL CHALLENGE

It's *Pinball Dreams...* and *Pinball Fantasies...* on one cartridge. What more could you possibly want from a GBA game, eh? Old-school with a capital, er, everything.



PC

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER

N/A

UK LAUNCH DATE

N/A

MEDIA

4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE

Variable



While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer. With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it is perfectly tailored for the FPS, strategy and MMORPG genres. However, it can cost a fortune to keep a PC up to date and running fast enough to support flashy graphics.

TOP TEN MUST-HAVE PC GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Unreal Tournament 2003	Infogrames	Digital Extremes
2	Grand Theft Auto 3	Take 2	Rockstar
3	No One Lives Forever 2	Vivendi	Monolith
4	Operation: Flashpoint	Codemasters	In-House
5	Sim City 4	EA	Maxis
6	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	Io Interactive
7	The Sims	EA	Maxis
8	Counter-Strike	Vivendi	Gearbox Software
9	Half-Life	Vivendi	Valve
10	Civilization III	Infogrames	Firaxis

VIEWPOINT

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

James Bond might be the spy every man wants to be, but Cate Archer is definitely the one they all want. In a strictly videogame sense, of course. Honest.



VIEWPOINT

HITMAN 2

Eidos's rather impressive multiformat hit is definitely worth the investment on the PC – the silent-but-deadly style suits the format down to the ground.



PERIPHERALS

THEY MAY NOT BE EVERYONE'S CUP OF TEA, BUT EACH CONSOLE HAS ITS OWN MUST-HAVE PERIPHERALS – THOSE LITTLE EXTRAS THAT MAKE THE GAMING EXPERIENCE ALL THE MORE PLEASURABLE. YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THEM.

WAVEBIRD

DETAILS

CONSOLE

GameCube

FROM

Nintendo

CURRENT PRICE

£34.99

AVAILABLE

Now

Controller leads – the bane of any gamer's existence. Usually, they're too short which means you have to sit with your nose pressed up against the screen, but when you put them away you end up with a mess of wires and a potential health and safety violation. There is an easier way around it all though, with the WaveBird – the first controller made for a games console that works on radio waves. Forget infra-red and having to keep your controller in plain sight of the receiver, because the WaveBird lets you go almost anywhere you want – we

found ourselves standing at the bus stop while still playing *WaveRace*. Combine that with the enormous battery life and you've got yourself the essential GameCube controller – although it's a bit pricey if you want to get four of them.



RACING WHEEL

DETAILS

CONSOLE

Multiformat

PERIPHERAL

Official WilliamsF1 Team Racing Wheel

FROM

JOYTECH

CURRENT PRICE

£44.99

They might not be the most essential piece of kit when it comes to buying a console, but picking out a steering wheel is quite a big deal – especially if you're a full-on racing enthusiast. Unfortunately, most of the steering wheels out there today (including the so-called 'official' wheels) aren't much to shout about, but now there's a wheel that's available for all consoles that does the job perfectly. With its analogue pedals and steering, smooth gearstick and paddles, detachable wheel and lock-on lap rest,

JOYTECH's add-on is a fine effort.

Okay, so it looks rather garish and should probably come in black rather than Fisher Price colours, but for performance there's nothing better on the market today – surprising, considering it's a third-party peripheral.



CONTROLLER S

DETAILS

CONSOLE

Xbox

FROM

Microsoft

CURRENT PRICE

£24.99

AVAILABLE

Now

Even though a lot of people will have got used to the somewhat bulkier Xbox pad by now, we've never really been comfortable using it – the whole thing felt too clumsy and large for our admittedly small and elfish hands. In fact, that's the whole reason that we went out and spent a ridiculous amount of cash on the smaller Japanese Xbox controller... before finding out they were coming out over here as well. Duh. In any

case, the Controller S (as they're now known) is now the standard pad packaged with all new Xbox consoles but if you haven't got one, now's the time to go and invest. You'll never go back to your old pads once you've used a Controller S. Promise.



FLO-LIGHT

DETAILS

CONSOLE

Game Boy Advance

FROM

Gamester

CURRENT PRICE

£12.99

AVAILABLE

Now

Yes, it's the biggest selling handheld games console around at the moment, but that doesn't stop the Game Boy Advance from having a major flaw – it's too damn dark. The lack of a back-lit screen makes playing games in broad daylight tricky (and absolutely impossible in the dark), but thankfully help is at hand. The Gamester Flo-Light clips neatly over the face of the GBA

and flips up to shine light over the screen from above. It can be clicked into a number of positions and the swivel fluorescent bulb means it's easy to reduce glare. What's more, it folds down into a compact position when you're not using it and doesn't eat up batteries. If you're as compulsive about your GBA as we are (and don't dare try and have an Afterburner fitted), then the Flo-Light is essential.

Now you can play your GBA anywhere. In a disused mine, for instance. Or a well.





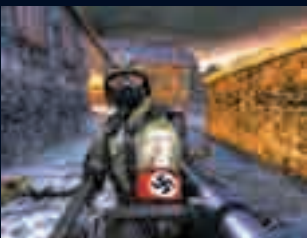


NEXT MONTH IN **games**TM

So, that's issue 2. Did you like what you saw? Did ya? Good, that's exactly what we wanted to hear. Not surprisingly though, next issue's going to be just as packed with goodness. And it's only four weeks away...

MORE... PREVIEWS

No matter which system you've got, we'll have the previews that matter most. What's more, we'll be talking to the people behind the scenes to find out the most exclusive information we can.



MORE... REVIEWS

There are some big games coming out in the next few months, so naturally we'll be reviewing the best of them. We've got *RE Zero*, *Panzer Dragoon*, *Mortal Kombat* and much, much more...



MORE... FEATURES

Old consoles don't die – they just move onto bigger and better things. We'll be looking at the developers who still make games for systems you thought had long since met their maker...



INCLUDING

And still more besides...

More... Retro

Too cool for the old-school

More... News

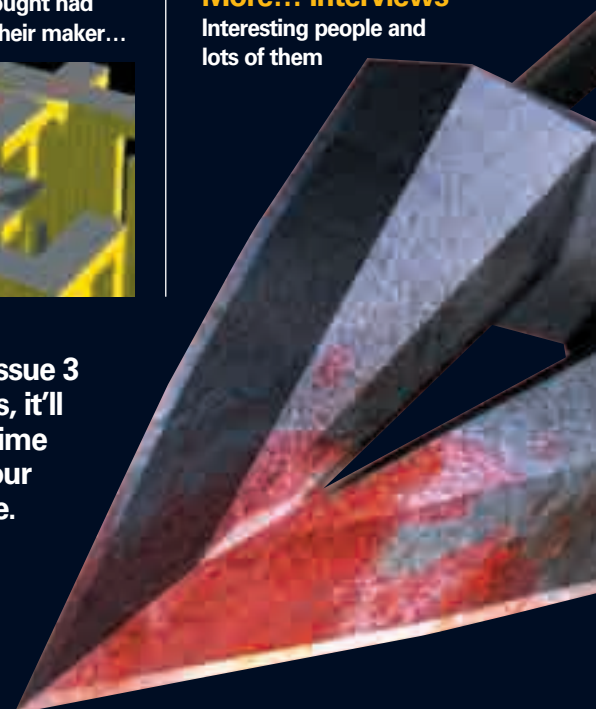
More up-to-date than ITN

More... Interviews

Interesting people and lots of them

Of course, that's only a taster of what's in store for you in issue 3 of **games**TM – you'll have to buy it to find out more. And yes, it'll still be 180 pages, despite the fact that we've got half the time to write it in than this issue. We've already brought our sleeping bags into the office – you know, just in case.

ON SALE **20 FEB 03**





MORTAL KOMBAT

Midway's seminal beat-'em-up is back and bloodier than ever. Check it out in next month's **games™**

180

PAGES OF
ESSENTIAL
GAMING

CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF **games™**

YOU SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE STATE OF VIDEOGAMES...

We're trying to promote debate or, at the very least, decent letters so we've made it as easy as possible to contact us. Please don't send us letters asking us about release dates of games (you'll find a pretty accurate release schedule on page 38) and no, we don't give out cheats or agree with statements about Bill Gates's illegitimacy. Sorry, but we're just in it for the games...

MAKING CONTACT

☐ There are many wonderful ways to get in touch with **games™**, the traditional postal method is perfectly acceptable using the address below:

games™
Paragon Publishing Ltd
Paragon House
St Peter's Road
Bournemouth
BH1 2JS

☐ However, there are quicker ways to reach us thanks to the technological marvel that is the Internet. Email us at this address: gamestm@paragon.co.uk

☐ Alternatively, why not get yourself on our dedicated forum? Here you should be shielded from multiple spams and infantile remarks. Access to the site has been password protected and only those of you who have bought this issue of **games™** will be able to get onto the site – and if you have bought this magazine then you're not the sort to be abusive and childish, are you? Follow these quick steps to getting on the **games™** forum and enjoy hassle-free chatting with those of us who share a passion for gaming.

☐ **Step One:**
Get yourself online. It's fairly simple, we're sure you'll think of something.

☐ **Step Two:**
Type the following into the Net Browser window: www.totalgames.net/forum/
This will give you read-only access to the forum. To get in on the fun, you'll have to register – you can do that by clicking on the 'register' icon at the top of the page. Fill in your details, choose a name and then wait for a password to be emailed to you (which will arrive in no time).

☐ **Step Three:**
Once registered, click on the **games™** forum icon. You'll need the password, and that's 'cockney'. Then a whole world of sophisticated wit and games chat will be yours. It says here.

☐ **I BOUGHT THE** first issue of your magazine and have to say I was thoroughly impressed with the whole package. Praise out of the way, I have to say I am particularly worried about what will happen to Nintendo's place in the games industry in the West. Unlike Microsoft, it doesn't have bottomless pockets and is not able to pump limitless amounts of cash into advertising and other hype-inducing methods.

A fair few adult gamers view Nintendo as too 'kiddie' and would rather plump for the Xbox or PS2. The younger generation, on the other hand, believe that the GameCube doesn't have enough credibility and fear ridicule if they buy one. That just leaves us – the real gamers, who respect games that are original and fun to play. Nintendo will always have its loyal fans, but will that be enough to sustain a serious challenge to rival consoles, both now and in the future? I have to say I fear the worst...

James Reed

We understand your frustration, but the fact remains that Nintendo has more than enough money to spend on advertising but chooses to rely on the merits of its games, and not without good reason. Titles such as *Zelda* and *Mario Sunshine* will always shift consoles and games such as the *Resident Evil* series and *Metroid* have helped increase hardware sales in the US. While we're alarmed at Nintendo's seemingly lacklustre approach to pushing its hardware and software – especially considering Microsoft's increasingly aggressive pricing policy – there's little doubt that Nintendo is now beginning to work much harder. Few could have failed to notice the furtive attempts to advertise GameCube games in the run up to Christmas.

Nintendo has obviously spent money to promote games such as *StarFox Adventures*, which is a step in the right direction. As the most established console manufacturer, it's sad to see Nintendo seemingly floundering around and losing ground to the yappy upstart that is Microsoft. However, there's little doubt that few developers can produce games like Nintendo. Perhaps that's the point – Xbox and PS2 might be shifting by the bucket load, but does that really matter? As long as there are enough of us out there to ensure that Nintendo's products sell, then Nintendo need not get involved in spending huge amounts of money on advertising...

☐ **I VISIT MY** local game store and see too many cheap, shoddy, badly thought-out excuses for video games. If you look over to the GameCube section (albeit the console with the most original games) it still has too many ports (*Medal of Honor: Frontline* and *Jedi Knight 2* spring to mind) and you always get a dump deal from companies like Konami, who seem to think the only titles to release on a console are Mickey Mouse games.

You look over to the Xbox area and Microsoft is clearly sweating. The corporate monster is so stuck for good games it has resorted to buying out any company that won't develop for it and releasing stupidly low-priced bundles. But for Microsoft, things can only get better (they can't exactly get any worse, can they?) – it has a fantastic array of games coming out and it is not just relying on ports.

Then we come to the PS2. I am very displeased with the current state of the PS2 – it has approximately one good, original game coming out (*The Getaway*) although that

SMS TEXT

■ We've got an exclusive
SMS text service sponsored
by Orange.

Simply text us your
question or comment on

07970
043498



The *games*™ SMS texting
service is brought to
you courtesy of Orange.
For more information on
Orange's range of
wirefree™ games log
on to:
www.orange.co.uk/multimedia

"NINTENDO WILL ALWAYS HAVE ITS LOYAL FANS, BUT WILL THAT BE ENOUGH TO SUSTAIN A SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO RIVAL CONSOLES?"

seems like it will be borrowing ideas from a rather popular crime simulator. Then again, it has the widest choice of games and is usually the cheapest – this attracts casual gamers. I do not think it is fair to criticise these people – they are one of the main reasons that the videogames industry is growing more popular every day. But this is why the PS2 will win every time. Depressing, isn't it, that *FIFA 2003* and *Scooby Doo* are going to decide the mainstream path of the videogame industry.

But there is light at the end of the very long tunnel. GameCube has *Animal Crossing* and *Zelda* coming out – both will be very popular and amazing. The Xbox is getting more support and mainstream games are coming out every day (which can only be a good thing) and the PS2 will hopefully be getting some originality coming in the next year.

Matthew Newell

It is difficult not to be snobbish about games and so-called 'casual gamers' sometimes. We're not necessarily massively keen on the *FIFA* series (for example) but many people are – and who are we to judge? One man's meat is another man's poison, and all that...

□ **CONGRATULATIONS ON AN** excellent first issue and if you continue to devote as many pages to Retro gaming in future issues then you can be sure that I will not miss an issue. It's about time a mainstream magazine gave credit to our gaming heritage rather than a token one-page effort. I am not accustomed to writing to magazines and even though my loft will probably collapse under the weight of all those different gaming mags I have read and

collected over the years, this is the first time I have felt the urge to actually put pen to paper.

I have been playing video games since the 'bat and ball' days and I feel extremely fortunate to have had first-hand experience of both arcade and home gaming through the last 30-odd years. It is a crying shame that the games players of today, or even ten years ago, have missed out on the impact of some of the early games back in the good old days.

You've probably guessed by now that I am a retro game fan and for the past five years have been a part-time collector. So that makes me a crusty old git who rants and raves how it was much better back in the good old days and today's games are a load of old tat. Whilst this is true to some degree, I cannot say that there haven't been some absolute gems in terms of both hardware and software in the lead up to today's 128-bit heroes. I would be a fool not to acknowledge landmark titles such as *Super Mario Bros*, *GoldenEye*, *Gran Turismo*, *Virtua Tennis*... I could go on to list a dozen more.

However, am I the only one who often feels that the majority of games released over the last few years just don't have the magnetic attraction that begs for more play? You know, the 'oh, just one more go' factor at three in the morning after saying the same thing since 10pm the night before. If I was to make a list of games to re-visit because they had that special something, then the games released in the Eighties would far outweigh those in the Nineties and probably 2000 onwards. Granted, they look old and crusty, like me, but the play mechanics and magic factor are still present in many of those classics and I feel that this is something that has often been overlooked in



CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF **games™**

TEXT LIFE...

- ☐ With regard to the Fairplay campaign, I didn't buy any games that week. Mind you, I was skint.

Unfortunately, that's a situation we're all too familiar with. Well done for supporting the cause though...

- ☐ I've read about EA releasing cheap games over in Australia. Is there any chance of that happening over here?

The Australian market is much less buoyant than over here. Our guess is that EA will be much less inclined to release a budget range in the UK.

- ☐ Any news on a Freeloader release date? Finally?

The delayed Freeloader should be out as you read this, but don't bank on it...

- ☐ Great mag, love the Retro section. How about a look at *Dungeon Master*?

Expect to see it in the Retro section very soon indeed.

- ☐ Got any cheats for *Nightfire* on PS2. Grrrr. We don't do requests...

- ☐ I was thinking of buying a new games console but I can't decide which is the best. Which one would you recommend out of the PS2, Xbox or GameCube?

As far as it goes, there's no such thing as 'best'. The PS2 has the most games and is most expensive. The Xbox is the most powerful and, if you shop around, it's also the cheapest. However, don't ignore the GameCube as it has an incredibly exciting line up for 2003. The decision, however, is yours.

- ☐ *SEGA GT 2002* is one of the best games ever. *Unreal Championship* is good but too jerky. Er, thanks.

With exclusive games like *Metroid Prime* coming to the GameCube, you can be sure that gamers are going to be more than satisfied with Nintendo's 2003 line-up.



▷ games released in more recent times.

Since I started collecting videogames, I have often gone back to more recent consoles and found some gaming greats that I had dismissed upon release. I can only guess that this was either due to the current top titles of that time overshadowing the release or the magazine reviews had given an undeservedly low rating due to the retro-style play or lack of visual flair. I suspect that there are very few magazine game reviewers over the age of 30, which would probably explain the lack of understanding of the older styles of game. That's progress for you. Retro games will always remain close to my heart and I will always enjoy revisiting them for a quick fix, but in reality I yearn for a much higher percentage of new releases that manage to awaken that special feeling all over again. But then again, we can all dream.

Just time to wish you luck with the mag before I pop up to find that bottle of Grecian 2000 in the bathroom cabinet. Think it was next to the Old Spice...

Tony Redpath

This is a popular train of thought: old games were better than those released today. The explanation for this is simple – when we were younger we invested more time playing games that looked pretty simple (by comparison to today's games) so we had to use our imagination a bit more to get properly immersed. Today however, much of the work is done for us, and it would be fair to say that some games rely far too heavily on graphical and audio finesse rather than the gameplay. But there are many recent games that have

captivated us in the way you describe. *Halo*, *TimeSplitters 2* (in multiplayer), *Metroid Prime*... Even games from the 32- and 64-bit era forced us to deprive ourselves of sleep. There are now more games being produced than ever so, logically, more of them are feeble. However, those halcyon days when you enjoyed gaming even more had plenty of duff games – it's just that you remember them more fondly.

- ☐ I READ WITH interest about the FairPlay campaign (**games™**, issue 1), and I'd like to say that I, for one, will not be taking part in this stupid protest.

I remember reading somewhere an interesting little letter from someone else, it was probably in *NMS* about five or six years ago, but the person who wrote in told a story. He was looking at games in a shop and saw *Tomb Raider 2* for £40. He made a comment about it being a rip-off to his father, who pointed out that although technology is improving all the time, the game prices have stayed the same.

In relation to a £40 NES title, a £40 PlayStation (or, these days, PS2 or GameCube) game is incredibly cheap considering you're getting a package that is bigger, better and (hopefully) better value than the £40 titles of yesteryear.

We never complained about paying £50 for *Donkey Kong Country* back in 1994. Heck, some of us quite happily got *Turok* for the N64 for £80 upon its release. People should take a good long look at it in a different perspective for once.

On the other hand, www.dvdboxoffice.com can get you import games for £30 or less, with



FROM THE FORUM

The battle of the consoles continues to be at the forefront of your minds...



2002 was a vintage year for gamers, with two new consoles and a raft of high quality games launched in the UK. Anyone for *Pong*? Nah, we'll stick with *TimeSplitters 2*, *Halo*, *Super Mario Sunshine*...

free shipping worldwide, so I get all my stuff from there these days anyway.

P. Smart

The pricing of games is a difficult issue. You're right to point out that games have got cheaper in real terms, but we have agreed to some extent with the FairPlay campaign. If games were cheaper surely more titles would be sold, which would make gaming more popular. The real issue is that while some games offer more than enough bang for your buck, others seem to be criminally overpriced. For every *Halo* there's a *Turok Evolution* or a similarly over-hyped, poorly-executed product demanding £45. Unfortunately, it's the shoddy games that make gaming seem expensive, but there seem to be plenty of people that are prepared to pay the money for just about anything. Perhaps the FairPlay campaign should be about the quality of games rather than the cost.

☐ **I DON'T KNOW** if it's just me here, but is it really vital that Nintendo sheds its 'kiddie' image? The casual gamer may still overlook Nintendo, but if it's making a profit should it really care? In Japan this image doesn't really matter.

Us Nintendo fans here in the UK may take a bit of criticism from our casual gamer friends, but to be honest this doesn't bother me in the slightest. My mates may laugh at me because one of my most wanted games is *Animal*

Crossing and it looks 'kiddie', but at the end of the day I'll be playing a cracking and innovative game whilst they'll be missing out and instead be playing *Final Fantasy 27* and *Metal Gear Solid 6*. Nintendo makes top-notch games, whatever their appearance, and as long as this continues it'll have my full support.

Chris Walker

And in a similar vein...

☐ **I THINK THAT** although Nintendo is trying to shed its 'kiddie' image, it is still not quite doing enough. If Nintendo come good with this big announcement happening very soon, then hopefully there will be more first-party mature titles. Let's be brutally honest here, what mature (and good) games have Sony released recently? And, given the choice, would you rather play a good 'kiddie' game or a poor mature game? I think the choice is obvious.

If a parent of a child aged under 12 goes into a game store and sees Xbox pushing *Splinter Cell* and Sony pushing *GTA: Vice City*, which are both unsuitable for younger gamers, they will also see Nintendo pushing games like *SFA* and *Super Mario Sunshine* and I'm sure that they will look at GameCube. This is one reason why shedding their kiddie image isn't necessarily the most important thing for Nintendo to do at the moment.
'Knuckles', from the forum



☐ **Kincaide / Junior Member / Member # 2050**

Posted 27 November 2002 01:49 PM

Nobody would deny that PS2 is way ahead for this generation – but second place is not yet certain. Over the past few weeks I believe there has been a shift as the Xbox overtakes the GameCube. From a casual buyer's point of view, the current Xbox package with two games as standard beats the GameCube *Sunshine* package. Also, the much-hyped Xbox Live is getting tabloid press that is raising awareness of the console. The main factor appears to be that people are choosing Xbox over GameCube because of the sheer amount of titles available. The quality of these titles is rarely discussed, rather the quantity. Does anybody else have any observations about the way the 'second place' is going?

☐ **Mario Mario / Junior Member / Member # 2346**

Posted 27 November 2002 02:06 PM

Frankly it would seem that Microsoft will win the Christmas war but this is more due to the amount of money Microsoft can lose. Nintendo will make a bigger profit at Christmas thanks to cheaper hardware costs and more first-party games that sell more. I think that the focus is always on Nintendo Vs. Microsoft, which is wrong. If Microsoft wants to do well it needs to topple Sony – it also relies upon a massive user base and huge third-party support.

☐ **Kincaide / Junior Member / Member # 2050**

Posted 27 November 2002 02:15 PM

Fair point. Although Microsoft consistently states that it is in this for the long term. I think it views the Xbox as a wedge in the door into the games console market. Xbox will establish its name then the next console will be able to use the Xbox base.

☐ **Kincaide / Junior Member / Member # 2050**

Posted 28 November 2002 10:49 AM

If the current trend continues, Xbox could create quite a lead on the Gamecube. The Cube has got *Metroid Prime* and *Zelda* coming next year – but will that be too late?

☐ **Rob25 / Member / Member # 5989**

Posted 28 November 2002 06:12 PM

I wonder if Nintendo will come to regret its current choice of storage medium as much as it did with the N64?

☐ **Keith@gamesTM / Administrator / Member # 777**

Posted 28 November 2002 07:39 PM

I don't think it will. The main problem with using cartridges was that third parties couldn't afford to use them. That isn't really a problem where GC is concerned.

☐ **Rob25 / Member / Member # 5989**

Posted 28 November 2002 07:46 PM

I appreciate that – maybe I should have left out the 'as much' bit. I was trying to get at the fact that the GC is the only console that doesn't play DVDs and what effect this would have on GC console sales in the long term.

☐ **Keith@gamesTM / Administrator / Member # 777**

Posted 28 November 2002 08:10 PM

Nintendo's line-up is individual enough to appeal to a different audience than that of PS2. Xbox is aimed directly at Sony's customers and, as such, offers a fairly similar gaming experience. Xbox has plenty of exclusives, though many of them don't stand out as much as those on GameCube. But many of them are great games so it's inevitable that Xbox will increase its market share.

"WE NEVER COMPLAINED ABOUT PAYING £50 FOR DONKEY KONG COUNTRY BACK IN 1994. SOME OF US QUITE HAPPILY GOT N64 TUROK FOR £80"

CONTINUE?

9

